

# Spring into action: It's not too late (or hard) to get fit

BY CAROL SOUTH

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Whether battling 10 pounds or 100, a few or dozens of extra inches, it is never too late to get off the couch and get moving.

With waylaid New Year's resolutions fading, area fitness professionals say now is a great time to create a new you.

"There's always hope, we have clients anywhere from 17 to 89," said Liana Lehnert, co-owner of Tres Fit in Lake Ann with two of her sisters.

People need to make exercise a routine part of life, Lehnert said. She recommended that her clients come to the gym at least three times a

week and make them set aside time for themselves.

Lehnert suggested that new clients try different equipment and classes. Learning to use the cardio equipment, cross training circuit and the free weights plus taking yoga, aerobics or a strength and stretching class boosts variety in exercise. With greater variety, people tend to attend more regularly.

"The biggest concern when starting a program is that only a third of people are still doing it a year later," Lehnert said.

For sedentary people or anyone taking on a new regimen, it takes at least a month to notice changes such as more

energy. When someone builds muscle, which weighs more than fat, their weight may not change as dramatically as their shape.

"Looking at the scales tends to be demotivating," Lehnert said.

Tres Fit owners believe so strongly in working out with a buddy, whether a husband or wife, other family member or friend. They offer "couples" rates to any of the above. Each helps the other through commitment lulls and just makes it more fun.

"People say, 'Yay, if I find somebody to join with I can get a discount,'" Lehnert said. "This can be anybody you care about and want to join the gym with."

Still lazy after all these years but not into gyms? The classic activity of running or walking may make the difference: it's low-cost and can be done anywhere — even year round for the truly committed.

Before starting to click off miles, proper shoes are key to both short- and long-term success. Trained staff at Running Fit help customers find a shoe that fits their feet as all major manufacturers make shoes for low-, medium-, and high-arch feet.

Fit is more important that looks, brand or a favorite shoe from way back when, said Sarah Golden, assistant manager of Running Fit.

"The shoe matters, they are



Record-Eagle/Lara Neel

Running shoes today are designed to fit a certain foot type, to match the stride of the walker and promote good posture. They are also good all-purpose shoes, not just for running but walking and some cross-training activities. The Brooks Ariel in the foreground is a motion control shoe meant for people with flat arches. It is a good running shoe that could also be used for court sports, but isn't the best choice for court sports. The Nike Free 5.0, which is designed to simulate barefoot conditions to strengthen the feet and the Brooks Addiction, is a general all-purpose shoe.

going to be the most important piece of equipment you need," she said, noting cost ranges from about \$70-135.

A running shoe should feel good immediately, with no "hot" spots of rubbing or tightness. Discomfort will not go away as a runner or walker "breaks in" the shoe. Instead, poor fit could cause blisters and contribute to more serious problems such as pain in shins, knees, hips or feet.

Golden said the two Traverse City stores offer a line of walking shoes but often walkers purchase running shoes.

"A lot of people end up in running shoes because they are designed for foot types," she said. "Slowly the brands are developing walking shoes for different feet."

Once a great fit is found, Golden recommended replacing the shoes at least every 300-600 miles — preferably the same brand.

"It takes time to find the right shoes, but your feet will thank you," she said.

The other side of the fitness coin is input — what you put into your body matters as much as fitness expended. For people looking to lose weight,

it is simple calories in, calories out equation. Dietitian Laura McCain stresses that both sides of that equals sign matter.

"The two go hand in hand. I found when a person decides to exercise, they automatically want to eat better," said McCain, a registered dietitian at Munson Medical Center.

Common sense, not fad diets or skipping meals, is crucial to creating lasting changes in fitness and eating patterns. It is important to eat often enough — three meals a day are the foundation — so that you are not starving or choosing unhealthy foods and oversized portions.

"Unfortunately, the horrid words 'portion control' are always going to be an issue because you can still eat out your exercise routine," said McCain, who also teaches a class on nutrition at Northwestern Michigan College. "You have to make up your mind because you want to feel better. Focus on health, then you eat just enough to feel good."

Carol South is a local freelance writer.



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