



Pick Your Path to Health

Find a Buddy/Join a Club

Let's face it. Exercise is one of the biggest challenges women face. The health benefits of staying physically active are well known, and women truly want to exercise for better health. So, why is it so hard to find motivation?

A fitness survey conducted by *Essence* magazine, in partnership with the YWCA of the USA and the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, found that African American women reported "lack of motivation, time, and energy"—in that order—as the greatest deterrents for those who do not exercise. Is that true for you?

To find the motivation you need to get in shape, look for an exercise partner or even join a club. You will have fun communicating with others and improve your health at the same time.

Find a Buddy

"Being able to call someone for encouragement to keep on going is important," says Mary E. Clark, Program Chairperson of the Board of Directors for the Black Women's Agenda, a non-profit education and advocacy organization in Washington, D.C.

Finding a buddy does not have to be difficult. "Keep it simple," recommends Clark. "Pick someone who you would have to spend time with anyway, look for a family member or someone who's nearby, or tie it to something you have to do."

Consider these ideas to help you get moving.

- Look for someone who shares the same long-term physical fitness goals.
- Find someone with a similar fitness level so you can grow together.
- Make a plan that both you and your partner find do-able and enjoyable.
- Seek a variety of activities if doing the same thing bores you. Or stick to the one or two activities that you truly enjoy.
- Ask a co-worker to join you for a walk around the block at lunchtime everyday.

- Find a virtual buddy and keep a fitness journal online at www.accenthealth.com. Follow the link to healthy lifestyles.

Join a Club

If the social aspect of exercising with a group motivates you, then joining or starting a club may be your best path to fitness. While the cost of joining a health club may be high, it may be a worthwhile investment. Here are specific tips on joining a club:

- Ask your local health club for pay-as-you-go options.
- Start or join a workplace walking or aerobic group.
- Look for more affordable community fitness centers that are sponsored by local counties.
- Start or join an exercise program at your neighborhood school, park and recreation service, or community college.
- Pursue group personal training. Get together with friends and hire a personal trainer for a more affordable way to get professional help.
- Look for walk-a-thons in the fall and in the spring. "It's a great way to join with a group for a worthy cause," says Clark.
- Start a fitness club at your church or join an existing one. The National Black Women's Health Project sponsors the Walking for Wellness program in communities around the country. For more information call (202) 543-9311 or visit their Web site at www.nationalblackwomenshealthproject.org.

See your doctor to discuss your plan before starting an exercise program. He or she can address any health considerations and help you determine if the program you are considering is right for you. Ask for specifics on such things as your cholesterol level, blood pressure, and how to take your heart rate. For a simple explanation on how to measure your target heart rate, visit www.blackwomenshealth.com and read "Beginning with the Fitness Basics."

Begin exercising at your current fitness level, and work up slowly. If you try to do too much at the beginning, you may face early burnout. Finding motivation to make exercise part of your regimen is a life-long process that will bring many benefits and will put you on a path to better health.

Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the

*National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/>
To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click
Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."*