

Healthier Lifestyles

“Providing people with the tools, motivation and inspiration to develop a healthier lifestyle”

Introduction



Firstly I would like to extend a warm welcome to anyone who is reading the Healthier Lifestyles newsletters for the first time. My name is **Andy Smith** and I am a Personal Trainer at Fitness First in Harrow and I am also the Fitness Champion for Harrow Council's Good Going campaign. If you find any of this information of use then please feel free to email me (andygsmith@gmail.com) and I will be more than happy to send you some earlier issues of the newsletters. Please encourage your friends and family to contact me to register their email addresses and I will add them to the Healthier Lifestyles contacts list, so they too can make use of the information presented in the monthly newsletters.

With the New Year approaching, the purpose of this newsletter is to encourage you to begin thinking about New Year's resolutions and the changes you can make to your current lifestyle in order to improve your health. I have been working closely with Fuad Omar at Harrow Council in order to put together a challenge for individuals who wish to make a change in 2007. A brief overview of the challenge is outlined in the next section. If you have any questions about any of the information in this month's newsletter then please do not hesitate to email me.

New Year - New You Challenge



The New Year - New You challenge is an initiative pioneered by Harrow Council in conjunction with Healthier Lifestyles to encourage the residents of the borough to 'take steps' to improving their health and general well-being. At this time we will not be revealing the details of the challenge, but if you are interested then please contact Fuad (fuad.omar@harrow.gov.uk) or myself (andygsmith@gmail.com).



The challenge will involve making changes to your diet and your level of physical activity and you will receive guidance and encouragement throughout the course of the challenge. It will last for approximately 10 weeks and will be starting on Monday 8th January, so you will have no excuse for giving up on your resolutions mid way through January, as is customary for most people!

We have specifically designed this challenge to accommodate individuals of any fitness level, so please support the campaign and be a part of this exciting project! Everyone can benefit from participating and prizes will be awarded for special achievements and improvements.

Exercise

This month's fitness tip is to ensure that your exercise programme is progressive. When embarking on an exercise programme of any type, one of your motivations should always be to improve yourself (physically or mentally) and if you do not progress then your body will not develop at any significant rate.

This principle is known as progressive overload and a given exercise, whether it be a resistance exercise or a cardiovascular exercise, can be progressed in a number of ways:

The frequency of exercise - The number of times the exercise is performed in a week

The intensity of the exercise - The speed, level or weight used for an exercise can vary the difficulty




The time / duration of the exercise - The duration of the exercise will affect the difficulty

The type of exercise - Different types of exercise can be more or less demanding

Exercise of the Month - Swiss Ball Crunch

The Swiss ball crunch is an excellent exercise for strengthening and toning the abdominal muscles. This exercise primarily targets the muscles to the front of the abdomen, but will also strengthen additional muscles of the core, used for stabilising on the ball.

The size of the ball used is dependent on your height, so please check with a health professional to determine which Swiss ball you should use.

<p>Firstly, get into a seated position on the ball. Take a small step forward so that the small of your back is in contact with the ball and the angle at your knees is approximately a right angle. Push your lower back into the ball, raising your shoulders and maintain tension in your stomach muscles. Place your fingers against your temples, so that you are in the starting position shown in the photo.</p>	
<p>During the next phase of the exercise you must ensure that you keep tension on the target muscles throughout the movement. This is achieved by slowly contracting the muscles of the abdomen. There should be no movement at the hips, as this will take the tension off of the stomach muscles. Instead, you should aim to bring your lower ribs towards your hips by contracting your abs and curling your abdomen.</p>	
<p>The final phase of the exercise is to lower yourself back to the starting position. Once again it is very important to maintain the tension in your stomach muscles so that you are working the muscle properly. Therefore, do not allow yourself to relax too far back over the ball. Your finish position is identical to your start position, with your lower back pushed into the ball and your shoulders raised.</p>	

Nutrition

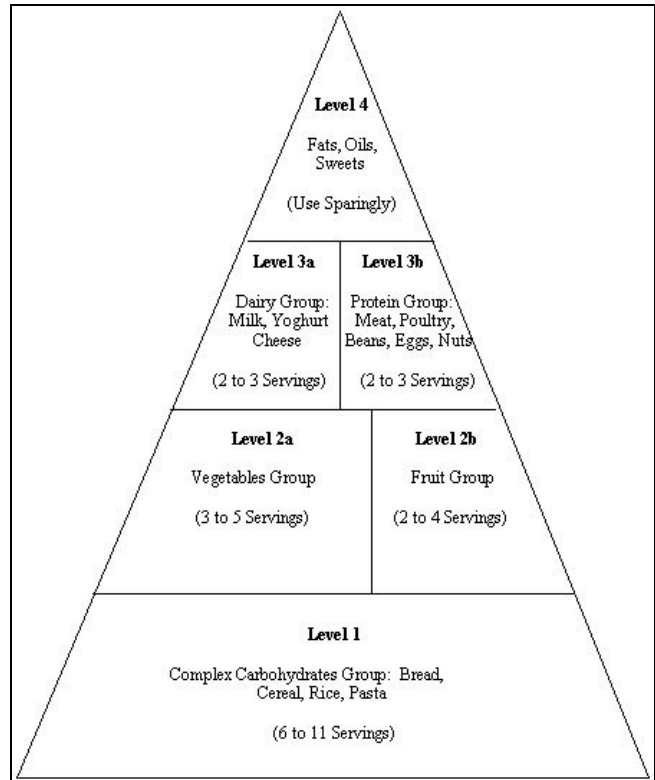
Last month I outlined a procedure for calculating your body's daily calorific requirement. I also explained that it is best to obtain your daily calories across 5 equal sized meals. This month I have described the healthy eating pyramid and how to use it in order to structure your meals throughout the day.

Next month I will provide you with examples of serving sizes as described on the healthy eating pyramid. You will then have plenty of information for structuring healthy meals, just in time for the New Year!

The next newsletter will be available in the first week of January so please email me to register for your copy!

The healthy eating pyramid is used to provide eating and dietary recommendations, in order to ensure that the body's demands for all of the essential nutrients are satisfied. By following the recommendations relating to numbers of servings per day from each group, a healthy balanced diet can be achieved. Consuming the minimum number of servings in each group from the pyramid will equate to a calorific intake of around 1600 calories. Consuming the maximum number of servings in each group will equate to a calorific intake of around 2700 calories. Try to evaluate your own requirements based on your own calorific needs.

A single serving size for a given food will vary depending on which food group it is in. A single serving of complex carbohydrates might be a slice of bread or half a cup of pasta, whereas a single protein serving could be half a chicken breast or an egg. Detailed examples will be given next month or can be found on my website:



www.healthierlifestyles.co.uk

Summary

Thank you for reading this month's newsletter and I hope you are able to make use of the information in order to develop your own healthier lifestyle. If you are keen to receive additional support during the New Year then please consider taking part in the 'New Year - New You challenge'. There is no charge to participate and you will be given every chance to improve your current health status. I look forward to sharing information with you in the New Year and I hope to have the opportunity to work with you to help you to succeed in 2007!