

LIFESTYLE



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Why You Should Consider Joining a Health Club



By **Tim Lencki**

Believe it or not, only 15% of the U.S. population belongs to a health club. I've always been amazed at how few people take advantage of the great opportunities a health club can offer.

I think that many people are intimidated to join a health club because a health club often gets stereotyped as a place where the young, perfectly shaped bodies get together to flaunt what they've got. This is far from the truth. In fact, between 1987 and 2000,

health club membership for Americans over the age of 55 grew 350%, according to the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) in Boston. This means that nearly one out of every five club members today is over the age of 55!

Joining a health club can be one of the most rewarding decisions you'll ever make. The following are some key reasons:

- **More consistency** — Many people have good intentions for exercising, but doing so on a routine basis can be challenging. But when you join a health club, you may feel more of a commitment to get busy and keep with it. Simply arrange your schedule in advance so you know which days are best for your workout.
- **Socialization** — Going to a health club several times a week means that you will probably meet many different members, most with goals similar to yours. After a few visits, you will get to know others by name, and they will know you, creating friend-

Break Through Barriers

Whether it's losing a job, becoming seriously ill, or something else, life can certainly be overwhelming at times. But rest assured, your labors are not in vain! As Booker T. Washington once said, *"Success is not measured by the position one has reached in life, rather by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed."*

There are many obstacles to starting and sticking with exercise. As a fitness professional, I've learned, heard, and read about most every exercise obstacle there is. It's these barriers that keep people from becoming physically active. Barriers include not knowing where or how to exercise, not enough time, no motivation, intimidation, cost, and

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ships and a desire to return regularly.

- **Equipment and services** — Health clubs feature the latest in exercise equipment, weights, and aerobic classes. From yoga to water aerobics, you can find a variety of techniques, methods, and

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Healthy Recipe: Cranberry Rice Plaf

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 teaspoon butter, unsalted
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onions
- 1 sprig fresh thyme (optional)
- 1 cup converted rice
- 3/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1-1/2 cups chicken stock or water
- salt to taste
- freshly ground black pepper

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Calories per serving: 177
- Fat: 1 g.
- Protein: 3 g.
- Sodium: 80 mg.
- Carbohydrates: 37 g.
- Fiber: 2 g.
- Saturated fat: 1 g.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a small ovenproof pot, melt butter over low-to-medium heat. Add onion and thyme, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, until onions become translucent but not brown.
3. Add rice and stir to coat evenly with butter. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes.
4. Add cranberries and the stock and bring to a boil over high heat.
5. As soon as stock comes to boil, cover pot and place in the oven for 18 minutes.
6. Add salt and pepper, and fluff with a fork.

Serving size: 2/3 cup. ▼

LifestyleTIPS®

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Quick Tips!

- **Quick Tip #1** — A little preparation can go a long way. It's extremely important to identify fitness goals before walking into a health club for the first time. Many people only ask, "How much does it cost?" As a prospective member, you should know what the club has to offer and how it can benefit you *before* you ask the cost. Price should not be a determining factor — know what you can spend *before* getting to the club.
- **Quick Tip #2** — Develop a routine. It's a proven fact that a structured plan for workouts, rather than deciding on a whim when and where to work out, will lead to greater success. Develop a workout plan a week in advance so you are making it a priority, and therefore can plan other events around it. For instance, wake up earlier, and head to the gym on a regular basis before going to work. After several weeks, you'll be amazed at how this routine has become second nature, and getting fit is a part of your lifestyle. ▼

Source: Tim Lencki.

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machines that will help you reach your goals. You'll feel more motivated to spend 30 minutes on your favorite workout technique at the club, than you will at home with a jump rope.

- **Encouragement** - Because of the many members at the club, you will probably cross paths with others just like you. As you develop friendships, you can encourage each other with comments, accountability, and by sharing enjoyable activities.

- **Professional help** - One of the most valuable reasons for joining a health club is the availability of professional help. Finding an exercise that is effective can be a challenging task. However, many health clubs provide certified personal trainers to help design and implement an exercise program just for you. ▼

Tim Lencki is a strength and conditioning specialist, and author of 'Fitness One Day at a Time.' Visit Tim's website at www.thefitnesseducator.com.

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others. Understanding which barriers you face and learning to overcome them are the keys to making exercise a part of your life.

This is not an easy task. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only one in five adults engage in a high level of physical activity, and 25% of adults engage in little or no regular physical activity. The good news is that you can choose the lifestyle in which to live.

Regardless of your age or past experience with exercise, it's never too late to start. Sometimes the adversity faced in life can teach the lessons needed to help make exercise more of a habit. Overcome that adversity today and get active. ▼

For more information on the nine most common barriers to exercise and how to overcome them, see Tim Lencki's book, "Fitness One Day at a Time," available at www.amazon.com or www.iuniverse.com.