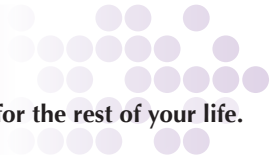




Finn Fitness & Wellness

Lose weight, increase energy, and achieve health and fitness for the rest of your life.



HOW DO YOU KNOW YOUR EXERCISE PROGRAM IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

In this article, you'll learn about all the components in an individualized, quality exercise program. You'll learn about the correct order and appropriate timing in which these components should be introduced. By the end of the article you'll be able to determine: (1) If your current exercise program is right for you; (2) If not, what you need to change about your exercise program; and (3), how Finn Fitness & Wellness can help you develop the correct exercise program for your needs.

There are many elements to a well-thought-out exercise program. Many people don't have an organized exercise plan and, as a result, tend to be unsatisfied with their progress. Others become bored and quit, or become injured and never want to risk injury from exercising again.

Here's the good news: You don't need a pricey gym membership to have a safe, challenging and highly successful exercise program. Many exercise programs that Finn Fitness & Wellness creates can be performed in your own living room. What's more, you don't need to spend many hours exercising during a week. A properly designed exercise program can be very effective and only requires 15 minutes a day!

Now let's find out what makes an excellent exercise program for you.

GOALS

The first thing you need for a successful exercise program is a goal. If you don't have a goal in mind, how can you determine if your exercise program is effective? Goals can include weight loss, general health, athletic performance, or simply being able to perform your daily activities easily for the rest of your life. Do you have goals for your exercise program?

ASSESSMENT

The next part of an effective exercise program is the assessment. This means getting a baseline measurement of your current level of physical abilities, posture, muscle function, joint function, spinal range of motion, and abdominal wall function, so these variables can be measured later to see how effective your exercise program is in achieving your goals.

As Paul Chek and Charles Poliquin have said repeatedly, "If you are not assessing, you are guessing." Guessing is how fitness trainers make mistakes and miss integral aspects of an individual's physiology. Years of study with the CHEK Institute has enabled Finn Fitness & Wellness to develop every aspect of the assessment process, to create a viable and diverse exercise program to improve the function of every system in your body.

Finn Fitness & Wellness performs a thorough assessment on all clients. This assessment takes about two hours – sometimes longer when people have multiple physical deficiencies. We perform a

multi-faceted assessment on everyone who is a client of Finn Fitness & Wellness. There are always a few elements added to the general assessment to learn more about a specific health issue that is unique to you.

For most people, the next three parts of the exercise program can be grouped together: (1) Flexibility, (2) Muscle balance, and (3) Mastering the seven primal movements.

FLEXIBILITY AND RANGE OF MOTION

Flexibility is imperative. If you can't move properly because you're inflexible, you'll inevitably cause yourself injury when performing necessary, everyday activities. For everyday life you need to be able to squat low enough to touch the floor with your hands, bend over at the waist to pick up things, twist around to look behind you, and many other basic movements. Injuries can happen at the joints, or at the muscles, simply from moving quickly and forcing a joint or muscle to move more than it's currently conditioned for. A proper stretching program will loosen tight muscles, allow joints to move freely, increase blood flow around the body, improve respiration, relieve stress, reduce pain and inflammation, and improve nerve function.

STABILITY AND MUSCLE BALANCE

Muscle balance is vital for proper function of the body, injury prevention, stability of the joints, and posture. Your daily activities cause particular muscles to become short and tight while others will become long and stretched. What's more, some muscle groups will become weak and others will become strong. The body functions best when it can maintain an optimal axis of rotation at every joint throughout every activity. If one of your muscles is tight or weak it will restrict the movement of the joint that it crosses. When a joint is restricted, other joints attempt to compensate for the limited joint's range of motion.

For example, here's what can happen if you have tight calf and hamstring muscles: When you try to squat down, your heels will come off the ground and your kneecaps will slide forward. Your pelvis will tip forward more and your lower back will flex and round prematurely, causing your chest and head to tilt down and forward. This will put much more stress on your knees, lower back joints, and the muscles and ligaments supporting those joints. Eventually this leads to pain, inflammation, and injury.

Each of us has our own unique imbalances. This is why two different people can attend the same exercise class, with one person enjoying the experience and the other walking out in pain. Finn Fitness & Wellness creates unique programs to balance your muscle groups and maximize range of motion to increase your flexibility over time. You'll be able to move freely without pain or loss of control. You'll feel stronger and more coordinated because your muscles are now working with each other instead of against each other.

THE SEVEN PRIMAL MOVEMENTS

Another vital part in an exercise program is mastering the *seven primal movements: squatting, lunging, pushing, pulling, bending, twisting, and walking*. Every activity we engage in embodies one or more of these movements. During an average day you perform primal movements between 100 and 1,000 times.

If you don't learn to perform these movements the right way, you risk pain and injury. Even minor and undetectable injuries can worsen exponentially over time, causing chronic inflammation and pain. This is one reason, why at Finn Fitness & Wellness we show you how to correctly perform,

and eventually master, each of the seven primal movements. Once you've mastered them all, you'll feel stronger, better coordinated, and more athletic.

After only six weeks of flexibility training, muscle balancing, and movement pattern exercises, clients of Finn Fitness & Wellness say they are amazed at how much better they feel and function in everyday life. Many clients are fully functional in only six to twelve weeks by spending fifteen minutes a day practicing the correct exercises. Regular changes (about every 8 weeks) in an exercise program's movements and exercise variables (set, reps, tempo, and rest) will maintain function and stability while also increasing your coordination and athleticism forever.

STRENGTH AND POWER

Once you achieve flexibility and muscle balance, and master the seven primal movements, you're ready to start building strength and power. Strength is the amount of force your muscle or muscles can generate in any given period of time greater than one second. Power is the energy of any movement you complete in less than one second. The amount of strength that you have is a direct correlation to the amount of power you can produce.

Unfortunately, many people start their exercise programs with strength and power exercises. This is one of the reasons why they become extremely sore, tired, and too often injured when they start a new exercise program. Many people, for example, begin in aerobics classes, cardio kickboxing, or even running. All of these types of exercises are fast or "power" movements. Yes, it can feel good because you're moving and it's stimulating your adrenal system – and most people's adrenal systems only work after a large cup of coffee! However, if you can't move correctly and have muscle imbalance and inflexibility, you'll eventually damage your joints, ligaments, and other soft tissues when performing power movements.

The same thing applies to strength training. If you take a body that is out of balance and has poor posture and attempt to make it stronger, the body will only become tighter and more out of balance, and posture will get worse. Before building strength and power, you must first build the foundation with flexibility, muscle balance, and the ability to move correctly.

The first questions to ask when it comes to developing strength are: How much strength do you need? What kinds of strength do you need more of?

First, let's talk about kinds of strength. *Maximal strength* is how much you can lift one time with no limit to the time it takes to complete the lift. Maximal strength is important for athletes who compete in sports such as football, track and field, and weight lifting. Maximal strength is also important for those who regularly lift very heavy objects – such as a piano mover. *Relative strength* is how much you can lift compared to your body weight. Relative strength is important for gymnasts, wrestlers, and athletes that want to be stronger without adding weight or size. *Endurance strength* is how much weight you can pick up a certain number of times or how much weight you can move in a given period of time, normally longer than three minutes. Endurance strength is important to labor workers who need to pick up and move somewhat heavy objects repeatedly throughout a long day. UPS drivers, farmers, and construction workers are examples of people who need endurance strength.

Second, let's look at how much strength a person needs. A football player needs to be very strong to push other players and tackle, but a marathon runner just needs enough strength to run and perform his or her everyday activities. Finn Fitness & Wellness determines the heaviest object you're likely to lift in your lifetime and develops your strength to lift that amount plus 15%. People have a much lower chance of injuring themselves when they can lift 75% of their body weight ten times or more.

Many women are fearful of weight lifting because they think they will become muscle bound, have to shave twice a day, and sound like Mr. Ed. Very few women can actually become muscle bound. Most women can lift weights and gain substantial strength without becoming larger. For example, female Olympic figure skaters often weigh no more than 110 pounds and can squat more than 250 pounds. Women start losing strength after seven days and men ten days, so women actually require more frequent weight workouts than men do. We all need a certain amount of strength. It's just a matter of finding out how much is enough for you and your specific needs.

Power is the final component to develop in a complete exercise program. Power training is the most demanding on your joints and connective tissue. Many people don't think they need power in their everyday lives. However, we all need some level of power. Throwing a ball of any kind is power. Pushing your child on a swing is power. Punching and kicking is power. Again it's imperative to determine how much power you need and want. Some people may require certain power movements for sports, such as golf. Others may only need enough power movements to do regular activities with family. One of the other most important things about power is that you should not train with power exercises all the time. Power activities are strenuous on the body's connective tissues. Because connective tissue doesn't receive the same amount of blood flow as muscle, it does not gain strength or repair as fast as muscle does.

The amount of power you can generate is directly related to how strong you are. Thus, you must first increase your strength before you can become more powerful in your movements.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Putting it all together is the fun part. Let Finn Fitness & Wellness help you turn all this information into a unique and specialized exercise program. At Finn Fitness & Wellness, we are professional corrective high-performance exercise and kinesiology specialists. We offer a free 30-minute consultation to discuss how to begin exercising safely and effectively. We'll take all of your life variables (goals, schedule, etc.) into account as we build and progress your exercise program to reach your goals safely, quickly, and efficiently, so you can maintain your fitness level for the rest of your life.

By Michael Finn

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