



8 Easy Steps to Improve Health and Fitness in 2016

Organisers of the Hollard Daredevil Run offer tips and hints on how to make 2016 the year of good health and well-being

Now that the holidays are over, it seems as though everyone's packing leafy-green lunches and hitting the gym hoping to burn off the festive season weight gain. While the idea of burning off the extra flab quickly is great, it's important to remember that you don't have to drive yourself to the brink of exhaustion to feel like you've achieved a great workout. Rather start at a manageable pace and gradually ramp up your workout to sustain a healthy, active lifestyle going forward.

Organisers of the Hollard Daredevil Run worked with Ironman Coach Barry Rankin to put together some easy fitness tips to get your mind and body in gear for the New Year.

1. **Set a goal** – According to Rankin, the first step to any health or fitness regime is to set a goal. Rankin suggests identifying a goal and sharing it with friends and colleagues who can hold you accountable. "Set a realistic goal, taking into consideration your responsibilities and commitments, while ensuring that it is challenging enough to make you get out of bed on a morning. Share your goal on Facebook, tweet about it or join a training group to keep you motivated and on track," says Rankin.
2. **Walk it out** – If you haven't been particularly active of late, launching head-first into a high-intensity workout may not be the best idea. Starting at a slower pace will help you turn a workout into a fitness routine in the long run – and a simple 20 to 30-minute walk, at least four times a week, is the best way to go about it. [Walking not only improves muscle strength and endurance](#), but also strengthens cardio-vascular ability, boosting endorphins and serotonin. Turn a brisk walk into a workout by incorporating some running or 'fartlek' training which involves short, structured bursts of running followed by a light jog to recover. Repeat the burst a few times to start, and build up the number of repetitions over time. This could be as simple as sprinting from 1 lamp post to the next and then jogging for 5 minutes between bursts.
3. **Run for the hills** – Hill-training, while challenging and often strenuous, is [one of the best ways to build strength as a runner and improve running technique](#), making leg muscles work just a little harder and pushing you just a little further out of your fitness comfort zone. Rankin suggests finding a quiet street with a medium incline hill on which to train. Start by running to the base of the hill as a warm up and then sprinting up the hill at a hard pace for 30 seconds to a minute. Walk or jog back down, repeating this 2 to 3 times to start, gradually building up to 8 repetitions. If you're not comfortable on the road, you can simply increase the incline on the treadmill. Aim to include hill-training in your workout at least once every seven to 14 days once you have built a basic level of fitness
4. **Join a running group** – As any seasoned runner will tell you, getting into a running routine can be difficult at the start. Having a buddy or a group of friends to run with motivates you to keep at it, allowing you to grow and share your passion for running and fitness with others. Go the extra mile and challenge your friends to take part in local events, like the [2016 Hollard Daredevil Run](#) taking place in Joburg, Cape Town, and other SA cities on the



19th of February. The Hollard Daredevil Run is an annual event that raises awareness of male dominated cancers, and you can show your support by [registering](#) for the run today. Gather your friends and running buddies, and challenge them to a fitter 2016 and a 5km run in purple Speedos for a cause.

5. **Stick to the plan** – Following a fitness plan allows you to develop a routine to help you ramp up your fitness levels over time. Ask someone qualified to help you [draw up a workout plan](#) for the week, allocating specific times in the day for runs, gym sessions, general exercise and recovery (remember to include hill-training in your weekly workout). Fight the urge to skip a day where you had planned to be active, reminding yourself of the great way you feel after that run or gym session. A great way to combat laziness and maintain motivation is to keep a copy of your workout schedule on the fridge, or set reminders into your phone for each day.
6. **Have a break** – Including rest days between workouts provides your body with some much-needed recovery time, allowing your muscles time to heal after strenuous activity. [Rest time replenishes the energy stores](#) known as muscle glycogen, and repairs tissue damage that naturally results from physical activity. It is also the time that the body needs to adapt to the stress of exercise – for beginners in particular – and ensuring that rest days are built into fitness programmes helps to build endurance and maintain overall motivation.
7. **Time over distance in training** – Rankin states that all runners, amateurs and professionals alike will benefit more from following a time based program based on heart rate measurements or effort levels over a distance based program (with the occasional exceptions on certain training sessions, ie: track). “Focusing on time will allow you to build up your fitness more consistently as it takes into account your current state of fatigue, stress and general mood.” When drawing up your training programme, set achievable time-based goals that will push you out of your comfort zone, or aim to beat your personal best (PB) at each run you enter over the course of the year.
8. **Mix it up** – cross-training is essential for a balanced workout. It is [far more beneficial](#) to include it as part of your fitness programme than to simply focus on running alone. Cross-training involves aerobics, strength training and flexibility, adding variety to your workout routine and contributing to whole-body fitness by making better use of a range of muscles. Swimming, lifting weights at the gym or incorporating yoga into your schedule will spice things up and ensure your workout never becomes a repetitive, dull and boring routine.
9. **Make it fun** – entering into a new fitness programme, especially this time of year, runs the risk of abandonment in the face of pretty much anything that we feel might take priority over a workout – other commitments, limited time or even missing a favourite TV show. Sticking to it is the half the battle won, so [keep things interesting](#) to keep yourself from getting bored and ditching it altogether. Create a playlist with all your favourite music to get you pumped during a workout (if you are running on the road just make sure you can still hear the traffic around you), and enter for a run or fun event like the [Hollard Daredevil Run](#) to give you something to work towards.



Whether you'd like to lose a little holiday weight or simply develop and maintain a fitness regime, follow these easy tips and make 2016 the year of good health and well-being.

Ends.