

# FLAB TO FIT FIRMING UP THE COUCH POTATO

YOUR 12-WEEK PLAN FOR A HEALTHIER YOU

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**Y**ou've eaten all the leftover turkey, indulged in that extra piece of pie and spent your holiday sprawled on the couch as the kids played with their new gadgets. But with those memories made—and now in the past—it's time to get off the couch and into a healthy lifestyle.

Start the new year—and a new you—with a 12-week fitness plan. Consult your physician before starting a new exercise program, and make sure that your plan is one that you can realistically commit to and stick with. Make goals and believe in yourself to accomplish them—it's as easy as getting up and getting active.

**week 1** Get off the couch and start walking! Go for a walk or use a treadmill for at least 15 minutes and for a minimum of three days per week. (Be sure to stretch after each walk.) Schedule a session with a personal trainer or fitness professional who can design a weight-training routine for you and teach you correct form. Whether you decide to continue with a trainer or go it on your own, you need to start lifting weights. Weight training increases not only your strength but also your metabolism. Start with a full-body workout and perform one or two sets of each exercise.

**week 2** If you're looking to lose weight, now is the time to incorporate healthy eating habits and control your calorie intake. Remember that this is a lifestyle change as opposed to "going on a diet." Also during your second week, add an extra day to your walking program, keeping the time to 15 minutes. Perform two non-consecutive days of weight training to include all major muscle groups and your core. Complete one or two sets of each exercise. To prevent injury, you must start slow—the biggest mistake many people make when starting an exercise program is doing too much too soon.

**week 3** Continue to walk four days a week, but increase your time to 20 minutes. Perform two full body weight-training sessions a week, but now complete two to three sets of each

exercise. If you're having trouble counting calories, then try keeping a journal or consult a nutrition specialist for guidance.

**week 4** Continue with your walking program of four days a week but increase your walk time to 30 minutes. If you feel up to it, you can weight-train three times per week, but be sure to listen to your body. If you feel excessive muscle soreness or fatigue, then back it down to twice weekly.

**week 5** Increase your walking to five days a week and increase your pace. Vary your weight-training program as your body adapts to the same exercises.

**week 6** Continue to walk five times per week for 30 minutes at a faster pace. Make your workouts progressively harder by increasing the amount of weight you lift or splitting your weight-training routine into specific muscle groups on certain days. To continue improving your fitness, you need to keep challenging your body.

**week 7** Now try alternating between walking and jogging, so you walk for four minutes and jog for 30 seconds. Continue with your weight-training routine. As you become stronger, you may progress to more advanced variations of activities for each muscle group.

**week 8** Little increases make a big

difference, so walk for three minutes and jog for 45 seconds. Always warm up before your workouts and be sure not to work the same muscles within 24 hours. Stretch after each workout to prevent muscle soreness and stiffness. At this point, you've stuck with the regimen for two months—you should be proud of what you've accomplished!

**week 9** Walk for three minutes and jog for one minute. Continue to challenge yourself in your weight-training routine.

**week 10** If you're trying to lose weight, then you should notice a remarkable difference at this point. If you're following the exercise program and you don't see any change in your weight, then

you're probably not being consistent with your diet.

**week 11** If you feel up to it, increase your jogging time or pace. If you need help varying your weight-training program, or if you need ideas to make your routines more challenging, a certified personal trainer can help.

**week 12** You are now well on your way to a healthy and fit lifestyle. Continue to challenge your body with your walking and weight-training program. Drink plenty of water and make good choices when it comes to food. Most of all, be happy with all that you've accomplished and continue on the path to a healthy lifestyle. ■

## You have the rest of your life to live— make it a healthy one!

### About the Author



Gayle Pinn, C.P.T., is the owner of Results Personal Training Studio. She's a certified personal trainer and spinning instructor who specializes in one-on-one personal training for all fitness levels.