



# Flexible Fitness

## The Fitness Motivation Monitor



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Fed Up with  
Diets and Exercise  
That Don't Work?

**You're not alone!**  
**Call 530.873.0377**  
**for help!**

## Exercise Away The Blues

Did you know that exercise can help relieve depression? Research continues to show many forms of exercise are as effective as taking antidepressants for mild to moderate depression. Exercise is also an effective addition to medication in the treatment of severe depression.

A recent study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine showed that daily bouts on the treadmill, for ten straight days, lessened depression in over half the participants, all of whom had suffered from depression for nine months.

The researchers point out that aerobic exercise has the same effect as antidepressants, in that it stimulates neurotransmitters in the brain to produce serotonin, an endorphin that enhances mood. In addition, exercise generally does not have any side effects, unlike drugs. Another benefit is that exercise is faster acting than antidepressants. The endorphin effect is felt immediately after exercise, as opposed to waiting two to three weeks for medication to take effect.

The problem is, when someone is experiencing a depressive episode, exercise is usually the last thing they want to do. So how can you help yourself, or someone you know that is depressed, get started with exercise? Here are some tips:

- Set small goals such as walking for five minutes. You may find you want to go longer once you get started. If not, stop after five minutes and set a new goal for the next day.
- Be gentle with yourself – do what makes you feel good. Engage in positive self talk and treat yourself with respect.
- Start with exercise that you enjoy. Even if you don't feel like it now, once you get started the enjoyment may come back which can help with your mood.
- Exercising with a friend can make it more fun for you.
- Get some exercise outside (and, remember to wear your sunscreen). Sunlight is a natural mood enhancer.

As always, consult with your doctor first, especially if you suspect that you are depressed and have not sought medical advice. Medication and/or other treatments may be necessary. But you can take heart knowing that exercise is a simple, healthy tool that you can use to help yourself through this time.

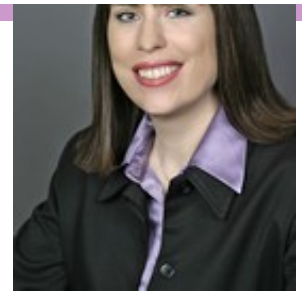
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## Message from the President

It's back-to-school time. But for those of us not back in school, we are wise to find ways to continue our learning process because the more we keep our brains active, the better we age. The Canadian Brain Research Centre



says, "Accumulating evidence shows that it is possible to ward off age-related declines in cognitive function by means of mental and physical activity." That's great news, because while aging is inevitable, *how* we age is not.



Applying this concept to fitness, many avenues exist to entice the brain. Some exercises have us on automatic pilot, such as walking or riding a bike, because we have done them for so long. Consider trying an exercise that requires more thought to engage in – a Pilates or kickboxing class will require concentration on aspects such as balance, coordination, and posture.

Consider reading about a fitness-related subject. This will engage your brain as well as provide valuable information to help you reach your fitness goals. However you choose to do it, keep on learning!

To your health,

Gillian Hood-Gabrielson

Flexible Fitness, President

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## A History of Chocolate

In October of last year, we started a new series on everyone's favorite - Chocolate! Why chocolate when this is a newsletter about health and fitness? Some of you have heard my teleclass called, "Chocolate Doesn't Make You Fat!". In this class I talk about Intuitive Eating, which enables you to eat the foods you love without binging or feeling guilty.

A couple of months ago, I met Carrie Brown, a fabulous woman who has a business providing high quality chocolate! If you are going to eat it, make sure you get the good stuff! Check out Carrie's website at [www.carriebrown.com](http://www.carriebrown.com) and try some for yourself! Chocolate makes a GREAT gift!

The name "Carrie Brown" is written in a stylized, brown, cursive font with a slight shadow effect, set against a light beige background.

Carrie will be giving us an education on chocolate in the coming months. This month we continue with ...

### Storing Chocolate

Chocolate is ideally stored at 16-18 degrees and eaten at room temperature. If you do need to put your chocolate in the fridge make sure it is sealed in a plastic container or bag to avoid moisture affecting the chocolate. Never eat chocolate taken straight from the fridge – the flavors will be lost.

## The Science

### Antioxidants in chocolate

We know you may find it difficult to achieve this state of mind, but premium chocolate really is good for you. Obviously eating too much of any one thing is not contributing to an overall balanced diet, but as we have all been told many times "a little of what you fancy does you good". And it's true with high quality dark chocolate. Chocolate carries high levels of chemicals called phenolics, these are the same antioxidants as found in red wine (this news just gets better). Apparently antioxidant phenolics prevent fat-like substances (cholesterol) in the bloodstream from oxidizing and clogging the arteries which can, in turn, lead to heart disease. Research recently carried out at King's College, London, suggests that these antioxidants found in cocoa can also help decrease stress levels and protect against disease.

In addition to its beneficial effect on blood cholesterol levels, recent research has shown that cocoa contains a wealth of phytochemicals and polyphenols, which have significant antioxidant properties and may help to reduce the risk of developing cancer. In fact, tests have shown that cocoa powder or high cocoa content chocolate bars have equivalent or greater antioxidant activities than many fruit and vegetables and even red wine. So it's official, certain chocolate and red wines are not as bad as you might at first suspect and even have health benefits.

### A Chocolate high

Some scientists say chocolate contains substances that have the same effect on the brain as marijuana. A University of Michigan study says chocolate causes the brain to release b-endorphin, a naturally occurring chemical similar to opium. A similar study in Italy identified the culprit to be a pleasure-inducing compound called anandamide to be responsible for imitating the effects of marijuana. However, you'd have to eat about 25 pounds of chocolate to get "high."

### Caffeine in chocolate

The caffeine found in chocolate is negligible. Only 22mg found in a sample 50g bar of dark chocolate compared to 120mg found in a cup of coffee. Milk chocolate contains much less of course due to the lower cocoa content.

Fine chocolate, painstakingly produced from natural ingredients, is every bit as sophisticated as a great claret or single malt whisky. Each variety has its own distinctive character, aroma and flavor. Just like coffee, varying the origin, type and blend of cocoa bean opens an endless range of subtlety to the palate.

The principle ingredients of commercial chocolate bars and bonbons are not cocoa, (on average 20% by volume), but sugar, saturated vegetable fat and powdered milk. These dietary villains are responsible for chocolate's undeserved reputation as a fattening, tooth-decaying, addictive indulgence. True chocolate is a far purer, healthier product. A single square of chocolate made by French manufacturers Valrhona, in France, for example, contains 70% cocoa solids, but only a tenth of the sugar of the typical so-called chocolate bar.

There are three types of cocoa bean: Criollo, Trinitario and Forastero. The Criollo is the king of all beans. With a characteristic fruity flavor and with some acidity, it corresponds very closely to the Chardonnay grape used for making Champagne, Chablis, and so on. The Trinitario is a very mellow bean with a variety of characteristics ranging from newly mown hay, oak and honey to balsamic. The Forastero is a rather bland bean which is generally roasted very high in order to disguise its inadequacies.

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**You Really CAN Eat What You Want**

At every turn diets tell us what to eat and what not to eat, but this "information" doesn't help most people. Rather, it leads to confusion, frustration, and worse, weight gain. That's right: research indicates that while dieting can lead to initial weight loss, 95% of people who lose weight on diets eventually gain it all back – and sometimes more!

A two-year study at the University of California, Davis, divided obese women into two groups: dieters and non-dieters. Dieters had moderate restriction placed on their eating while non-dieters learned to eat intuitively: tuning into to hunger, satiety, and how food made them feel.

"We have been ingrained to think that seriously large people can only make improvements in their health if they diet and slim down," said nutrition researcher and professor, Linda Bacon, who conducted the study along with Judith Stern, a UC Davis professor of nutrition and internal medicine. "But this study tells us that you can make significant improvements in both metabolic and psychological health without ever stepping on the scales or counting calories. You can relax about food and eat what you want."

At the end of the study the non-dieters had not lost weight, but succeeded in improving their overall health, such as cholesterol levels, blood pressure, physical activity, and self-esteem. The dieters, on the other hand, sustained none of the short-term improvements they experienced and they worsened in terms of their self-esteem.

Additionally, 92 percent of the non-dieting group stayed throughout the entire two-year treatment period, but 42 percent of the dieters dropped out before finishing treatment. This reinforces the point that people do not react well to diets – deprivation – but are more likely to be successful and stay on track with a non-diet. I like what I'm hearing!

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## Eight Fun Fitness Tips

1. **Try the "Three Bite" Strategy** – Made popular by the recent book, *French Women Don't Get Fat*, by Mireille Guiliano, it is commonly accepted that the first three bites of any food are the most enjoyable. This is contrary to what many people practice which is, "It tastes so good, I must eat more." Try the three bite strategy for one week with desserts or any other food that you would normally eat until it's gone. Most people are pleasantly surprised to find they can be satisfied with less food than they thought.
2. **Incorporate as many colors as possible into your meals** – As most of the color variety in our food comes from fruits and vegetables, you are sure to have a balanced, and quite healthy, meal.
3. **Bring your lunch to work two days a week** – and eat it outside. It is easier to control the nutritional quality of your food when you know exactly what's in it. This is also a great way to bring a little relaxation into your workday, enjoying the outdoors along with your own home-made lunch.
4. **Organize an area of your home each month** – It certainly burns more calories than watching TV and you have the side benefit of a clean and organized living space.
5. **Grow your own vegetables or herbs** – This carries a double

bonus: you can grow your plants without chemicals and gardening will put more activity into your day.

6. **Make a list** – Do you ever find yourself lying awake in bed, thinking about everything you didn't get done that day or making mental lists for the following day? Experts recommend writing out a list before bed of all that you need to do the next day. This can help you get to sleep quicker and sleep more peacefully, which is more important to health than most of us realize. Our bodies need rest in order for our muscles to recuperate and grow; so get a good night sleep if you want the maximum benefit from your workouts.
7. **Try applesauce** – as a replacement for one third the butter or oil called for in cake and brownie recipes. Applesauce keeps it moist so you don't miss anything in the texture or taste. What you do miss out on is hundreds of fat calories!
8. **Instead of sending an email to your officemate** – walk over to their office. Look for ways to be more, rather than less, active.

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