

The Savvy Gal

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Staying Fit Through Fall

By Franci Cohen, personal trainer, certified nutritionist & exercise physiologist

Now that the warmer weather is coming to an end, many people are confused about their workout routines. You might have spent your entire summer swimming laps in the pool or using treadmills in an air-conditioned gym just to stay cool. With the weather changing to a cooler temperature, many exercise fanatics are finding it difficult to transition. Believe it or not, autumn is one of the best seasons to workout. There are quite a few benefits to exercising in this season and there are also a lot of different workouts that you can do to take advantage of the changing temps.

Falling Victim to the “Fall/Freshman 15”

“Whether you’re going back to school or back to the office, the decrease in everyday activity can leave you feeling sluggish and increase your cravings for comfort foods,” says Franci Cohen, personal trainer, certified nutritionist and exercise physiologist in New York City.

Franci tells us how to avoid the “freshmen 15” dilemma by setting new goals and switching up diet and exercise routines.

1. Make a diet & exercise plan and set an end date. Whether you are preparing for a school reunion or want to stay trim up to Thanksgiving, give

yourself an end date so you can focus on the prize. “In fact, scientific research has actually proven that people who pre-plan a weight loss program and WRITE DOWN their goals, succeed 90 percent of the time, as opposed to non-planners who succeed less than 10 percent of the time,” says Franci Cohen. If that’s not motivation to grab a pad and pen, then I don’t know what is!

2. Set and record new goals. Have you always wanted to participate in a color run or any other fitness challenge? Now is your time to focus on setting your goals and following through. “When your brain visually sees a concrete written goal on a piece of paper, it remains prominent in the brain, allowing the brain to analyze it as important, and forces you to form an emotional attachment to it,” explains Cohen.

Your goals don’t have to be competition- oriented, they can be as simple as ‘flatten my tummy’ or ‘don’t give in to late night junk food cravings.’ Whatever they are, make sure to write them down in a journal, on your fridge, or anywhere else you will be able to see it every day. Visualization is the key to success!

3. Try a new diet plan. The summer was full of snack bars, state fairs, and barbeques, so now you need to take back control of your diet plan. Take Cohen’s advice and you will be out of harms way.

a. Go green. Add more green veggies into your daily meals. Try putting them in a smoothie or adding as a side dish to any protein.

b. Drink more smoothies. In just one blended drink you can have almost all of your fruits and veggies for one day. Here’s one of Franci’s favorites:

The Tart N’ Tangy Juice:

- 1 Green Apple
- 1 Lime
- 2 large red beets
- 3-4 leaves beet greens
- 3-4 Carrots
- 3-4 Celery stalks
- Small piece of Ginger

c. Stop buying processed foods. We know the easiest thing for college kids to eat is pre-packaged meals. If your meal has to be heated up in the microwave, it's not the best choice! Cohen recommends keeping these items in a mini fridge for healthy snacking all day long:

- Hard boiled eggs
- Low fat cottage cheese
- Fresh fruit and pre cut veggies
- Gluten free hummus
- Vacuum sealed low-sodium turkey breast slices

4. No time to cook? No problem. Ordering take-out sometimes seems like the easiest way to accommodate a hectic schedule or short study break. If the mini-fridge is looking empty, go for healthy choices at your usual take-out spot.

- School cafeteria: Avoid the pizza/pasta station at the cafeteria. It may smell good, but the heavy ingredients will slow you down and leave you feeling sluggish. Go for a salad or sandwich with a lean protein and lots of veggies for an energy boost.
- Your favorite pizza place: If you're craving the crunchy crust and gooey cheese, opt for a whole-wheat thin crust with veggie toppings.
- Chinese take-out: Instead of sesame chicken at your local Chinese take-out place (which is breaded, fried, and covered in a sugary gooey sauce that is usually high in MSG as well), try steamed chicken and broccoli with brown rice and use a few duck sauce packets to lightly flavor your food.

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5. Change up your exercise routine. You may have been taking advantage of the warm weather by running outdoors, but constantly doing the same workout will stunt your metabolism and you won't see the same results. "As you perform the same exercises day after day, your body becomes much more efficient at performing them, thereby expending FEWER calories during each work out," explains Cohen. Franci advises that you need to challenge your body in order to change it. By mixing it up and cross-training, your body never knows what to expect, and has to always keep your metabolism revved up and raring to go, so that it can accommodate and succeed through even the most rigorous fitness challenges.

