

# The Fit Life

By MINDY SOLKIN

As the Summer Olympics drew to a close, I wondered how many people had been inspired to get up out of their easy chairs and lace up a pair of walking or running shoes. While doing my daily run, I thought how lucky I was that many years ago, I had been inspired by my brother to take up running, and that now it has become a way of life for me. I cannot think of any other sport which gives back so much - self esteem, energy, weight loss, stress relief, and a better quality of life for so little money, time, equipment, facilities.

Besides the obvious health benefits, it is also a great social activity. Many of my weekends are spent running with friends and then having brunch together. Other pleasures and benefits are more environmental. You start to appreciate the sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors; the change in weather and scenery; the concerns about air and water pollution. Mostly, though, fitness walking and running has measurable results. Nearly anyone, regardless of age, sex, or athletic experience, can do it.

If you have not been exercising on a regular basis - 3 to 4 days a week for 30 minutes each session; if you are over 30 years old, are overweight, or have any history of health problems - it is important to see a doctor and get a complete medical exam. If you are over 40, you may also want to take a stress test which will monitor your heart while you are on a treadmill, stairs, or sta-

tionary bike. Once you get clearance from your doctor, you are on your way to your new pursuit.

Before you get started, however, you will probably have questions such as - how far should I go, how fast, how frequently? What type of shoes and clothing should I wear? Should I eat before or after I exercise?

These questions and more can be answered at The Fit Life, an 8-week wellness program of walking and running classes in Bay Ridge, which are carefully designed to aid your development. Each class starts with a discussion on such topics as proper nutrition for better performance, weight loss guidelines, and cholesterol reduction.

Before and after the walk or run, warm-up and cool-down stretching is performed. At the end of each class, take-home packets are distributed with information about the class discussion. For more experienced runners, classes may focus on speedwork or training for the marathon.

Once you make the commitment to start, you are halfway there. With the proper guidance, you will be on your way to a happier and healthier lifestyle. Don't wait until the 1996 Olympics. Do it now! For further information about The Fit Life call Mindy Solkin at 718-921-9193.

The Fit Life column is a new addition for our readership. It will focus on running, walking, fitness and health topics for and about the Bay Ridge community.

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