Taking fitness to the next level

You’re going to the gym religiously and loving it, but something seems to be missing. It may be time rethink the way you look at exercise by adding new elements to your routine. The experts break down the benefits of rounding out the way you work out.

IZABELA SZYDLO life@metronews.ca

Massage therapy

“Before you start training, massage therapists can identify areas of weakness through a thorough assessment,” says Omar Lunan, a registered massage therapist (RMT) and owner of the Toronto-based mobile massage therapy clinic Core Care Wellness Centre (corecarewellness.ca). “Treating structural imbalances can eliminate pain and help focus on other areas that need strengthening. Delayed onset muscle soreness and slight inflammation are common post-workout concerns. Massage can decrease lactic acid build-up by increasing local circulation to muscles, decrease inflammation and directly affect muscle tone. If your range of motion isn’t Olympic standard, which for most people it isn’t, identifying if the restriction is neurologically based will allow an RMT to employ passive, active or resisted types of stretching to change muscle length and allow for more freedom. After a workout, a relaxation-focused treatment can ensure a good night’s rest, essential for post-workout repair.”

Cardio and resistance mix

“To maximize fitness levels, having a balance of cardio and weight training in your fitness regimen is key,” says Christian Alvarez, fitness director at Toronto’s Strength-N-U fitness facility (strength-n-u.com). “Lifting weights prior to doing cardio ensures that glycogen (the body’s readily available energy source) is depleted so stored energy (fat) is used immediately after. Safely pushing your limits with a routine that includes cardio and resistance will directly affect muscular and cardiovascular strength, and endurance. This means less fatigue and the ability to train faster, longer and harder. Because the heart is also a muscle, the increased output of blood increases the ‘pump’ feeling while weight training, resulting in burning more calories per workout and an increase in your metabolism for the day.”

Cleanse

“Weight loss is 80 per cent food and 20 per cent exercise but it is 100 per cent about how you feel. Floating and digestive discomfort make your pants fit poorly and your self-esteem take a nosedive. So, I always suggest that clients ‘cleanse,’ but not with liquid diets. What works is removing or reducing foods that contain baker’s yeast (which can cause bloating) and adding chia. This super-powered seed swells to absorb water in the bowel and gives you a solid happy, um, ‘go.’ A flatter tummy is more motivating than a liquid cleanse that can cause too many uncomfortable trips to the toilet. Start with a teaspoon sprinkled on breakfast and build up to a tablespoon each day. You will also help curb the appetite that can actually increase when you start a gym routine,” says nutritionist Theresa Albert of myfriendinfood.com.

Meditation

“Yoga offers many physical benefits — increased strength, improved flexibility, stress relief — but students often discover that the greatest side effect of yoga is how it benefits the mind,” says Annabel Fitzsimmons, a yoga instructor with 15 years of teaching experience, who can be found at annabelfitzsimmons.ca. “At its core, yoga is about creating awareness and heightening the mind-body connection. As we pay close attention to alignment and the physical sensations of each posture, and become conscious of the breath and its effect on the body, we train our minds to let go of the distractions that constantly fill our heads. Through yoga we can experience a meditation in motion, letting the mind become focused and calm as we move from posture to posture.”

A Study for New Mothers: Metabolism Assessment at 3 and 9 Months Postpartum

Researchers at the University of Alberta are inviting new mothers (3 months postpartum or less) to participate in a new study to help answer these questions.

- How many calories do you burn in a day?
- What is your metabolic rate?
- How efficient is your body at using fat for energy?

To participate, you must be: between 18 and 40 years old with no significant health concerns, able to walk on a treadmill for 35 minutes and willing to spend 24 consecutive hours living in a small, comfortably furnished, research suite at the University of Alberta.