

The Fitness Factor: Every Woman's Key to a Lifetime of Health and Well-Being

Lisa Callahan

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This book proclaims that there is a magic pill to wellness that anyone can have access to and afford: regular exercise. The author, co-founder and medical director of the Women's Sports Medicine Center at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, leverages her experience in sports medicine to bring the reader unembellished information and creativity on the major components of fitness that a woman should consider in creating an individual health and fitness plan.

A forty-year-old patient who wants to lose the fifty pounds gained during pregnancies is told that there is no best diet and exercise program. Different types of exercise have different health benefits. People who want to lose weight and improve their health must clarify their personal goals and learn how to reach them.

"Women name a tremendous number of obstacles to regular exercise," says Callahan, "but with a little creative thinking and planning, they all can be overcome." The number-one obstacle is usually a lack of time, so the author offers several ideas to find the time. If thirty minutes of consecutive exercise is not possible, one can spend ten minutes three times a day doing something like fast walking, gardening, taking the stairs, or even walking the dog. When shopping at a mall, park as far away as possible and walk quickly to the entrance. Do any household chores as rapidly as possible.

In a section called "Making Your Health and Fitness Dreams Come True," Callahan questions the safety of using ankle weights to burn extra calories. She recommends a weighted vest, but this dream may be slow to manifest, because there is no resource suggested for this relatively new tool. This lack of reference is rare, however. In "What Every Active Woman Needs to Know About Nutrition," the section on vitamins and minerals covers only calcium and iron, although the title suggests that the discussion would be more abundant.

The Fitness Factor offers a healthy dose of easy-to-understand information including the reasons for exercise, how to exercise without joining a gym, what exercise is best for certain health problems, finding the right athletic shoes, tips to stay motivated, and how to prevent injuries. Almost everything a woman needs to create an individual lifetime health plan is in this book.

PATRICIA WEBER (September / October 2002)

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