

Healthy (and FUN) Holiday Gifts for YOU!

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EXTENSION

Lancaster County

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It's all too easy to put on the pounds over the holidays by eating too many goodies and getting too little exercise. While shopping for holiday gifts, buy one or more of the following fun fitness-related items for yourself. Rev up your physical activity level without increasing your stress level. For the greatest benefit, open "your" present at the BEGINNING of the holiday season.

1. Pedometer. A recommended walking goal is to build up to an average of at least 10,000 steps daily. Turn your holiday shopping and cleaning into a step-a-thon! Make some extra quick trips up and down the mall and shopping becomes an aerobic activity!

TIP. If you don't like to fuss with programming a pedometer to figure mileage, buy one that only measures steps and is ready-to-go.

2. A workout video or DVD. It's like having a personal trainer on call. Consider the fun factor – try something different, such as a dance video. For example, you can buy everything from tap dance to salsa workout videos. Don't worry about following the steps – when you're dancing by yourself, there are no toes to step on! Make up your own moves.

TIP. Buy a video or DVD that is appropriate for your fitness level. For example, check that you don't buy an advanced level video of a workout if you consider yourself at the beginning phase.

3. Stability or balance ball. Try sitting on a stability ball while you watch that favorite TV show. The continuous adjustment and readjustment that your body makes on the ball will help strengthen core muscles. Plus, it's a lot of fun and a great stress reliever to bounce up and down. All that bouncing can burn a few extra calories, too! You might even decide to do some exercises on the ball.

TIP. Check the instructions on the box to purchase the ball size that is right for your height.

4. A new cookbook. You'll burn more calories standing to cook than in activities spent sitting down. According to an interactive tool, "How Many Calories Did You Burn," on WebMD.com, a 140 pound person might burn 80 calories during a half-hour of cooking. A passive sitting activity, such as watching television from your favorite chair, burns about 32 calories. While these are estimates, you get the idea. Just 50 extra calories of activity daily – the difference between the two activities, could lead to a weight loss of five pounds a year. An added benefit of this activity is a delicious meal!

TIP. Buy a cookbook that entices you to spend some time in the kitchen – don't feel you have to cook every day. For example, explore some of the cookbooks that use just a few ingredients.

5. MP3 player. If you've wanted to buy an MP3 player, this is a terrific time to do it. This device is great for enjoying music or recorded books – whether cleaning the house or taking a brisk walk. It might motivate you to take an extra turn or two around the block or burn calories cleaning an extra room to finish a book chapter or song.

TIP. Check with a salesperson or other knowledgeable source about the amount of memory you'll need with your MP3 player. You want to have the capacity to hold the number of songs, books, etc. for your intended use.



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