



Fitness Facts

Advice For Starting A Bicycling Exercise Routine

(NAPSA)—Like any form of regular aerobic exercise, bicycling can improve personal fitness, enhance your energy level, reduce stress and stimulate the immune system. It's also one of the more enjoyable forms of exercise, according to Tina Mayolo-Pic, a former U.S. Pro Tour cycling champion and a member of the Diet Rite Women's Cycling Team—one of the top-ranked women's cycling teams in the United States.

"Bicycling is an easy and fun recreational form of exercise that has real health benefits," says Mayolo-Pic. "Not only does cycling help improve cardiovascular health and strengthen muscles, it also gives you a sense of well-being. It's also easy to incorporate into your day. On a bike, you can run errands, commute to work or simply enjoy a leisurely ride through the park."

To help women and men take to the road to better health, Mayolo-Pic and the Diet Rite Women's Cycling Team offer the following tips for getting started with a simple bicycling exercise routine:

- **Check with your doctor.** Before taking to the road on a bike or embarking on any type of exercise or fitness program, it's a good idea to check with your doctor. If you haven't exercised in a long time or if you have certain medical conditions, your doctor can help you develop a program that is safe and the most beneficial for you.

- **Choose the right bicycle.** For beginning cyclists, you may want to choose a city or "hybrid" bike, which is a cross between a mountain bike and a road bike. City bikes are designed for use around town and are good for everyday riding. Mountain bikes are better equipped to handle more rugged terrain, such as dirt



Cycling—on roads or trails—can be a fun part of a regular fitness regimen.

tracks, while road bikes are good if you're planning to stay on relatively smooth roads. A reputable bike shop can help you determine the right bike for your needs and can ensure that the bike you purchase is the right size for you.

- **Start slow and gradually build.** If you attempt too much too soon, it may lead to soreness, fatigue and even injury. According to Mayolo-Pic, it's important to work out at your own level, start out slow and gradually increase the duration and level of difficulty as your body progresses. Try to cycle at least three times a week when starting out, but limit the amount of time on your bike to less than an hour each ride. You also should avoid big hills the first few months. As you become more comfortable on your bike, you can increase your mileage about 10 percent per week.

- **Practice your form and technique.** According to Mayolo-Pic, fluidity is important when cycling. Concentrate on your pedal stroke, and make sure you apply an even amount of pressure through the entire revolution. Avoid stomping down on the pedals. Instead, push downward and then pull the pedal backwards and upwards. This technique will not only

increase your performance, it will also exercise more muscles. Mayolo-Pic also recommends selecting a gear that allows you to spin the pedals at about 60 to 80 revolutions per minute. This pedal cadence will generally be the most comfortable and efficient for beginner cyclists, and will help prevent stressed joints and strained muscles.

- **Stay motivated.** Maintaining a regular exercise program can be difficult. If you find yourself becoming bored with your cycling routine, there are several ways to stay motivated. First, find a fitness partner. Cycling is a sport that can be enjoyed with friends and family. Second, try varying your route. Instead of riding on the same streets day in and day out, take a detour and explore other areas that are more scenic. Mayolo-Pic also suggests setting goals each week and keeping an exercise journal to track your progress. Finally, be sure to reward yourself. If you've maintained your exercise program, treat yourself to a massage or a special evening out.

- **Follow the rules of the road and cycle safely.** Bicyclists must obey the same rules as motorists, so it is important to understand all the traffic laws in your state. In addition, be sure to wear a bicycle helmet and bright clothing when riding your bike. Research shows that bicycle helmets can reduce head injuries by up to 85 percent.

In addition to these tips, Mayolo-Pic and the Diet Rite Women's Cycling Team recommend seeking out a local bicycle club for additional information on cycling in your area, local trails and special events.

To learn more, visit the Diet Rite Women's Cycling Team Web site at www.TeamDietRite.com.