

# 2015 New Year's Health Resolution

By Dr. Harold Wong for 12/12/2014 AZ Republic

There are less than 3 weeks left before the end of 2014 and it's an American tradition to think of New Year's Resolutions. Common ones include: stop smoking; lose weight; get healthier.

**I'm going to join a health club:** This is great, but it's a total waste of money if you don't actually use it. The holiday season is the time when health clubs have their biggest and most profitable membership drives. Please resist the temptation to sign up for a year, 3 years, or even a 5-year membership, enticed by the lower annual cost for the longer memberships. Some unscrupulous health clubs oversell their memberships; then go bankrupt; and open up a few months later under a different corporate name. If they go bankrupt after 2 years and you paid upfront for 5 years, you're out of luck.

**Dr. Wong's suggestion:** Even if you visit a reputable and honest health club, realize that most people do NOT keep their New Year's Resolution of working out. In January, February, and perhaps March, the classes are crammed and there's a wait to use the machines. By April, only the hard-core regulars are using the facility. It's better to join a health club that has a small initial fee to join and charges you monthly without a contract. If you stop working out in a few months, you have not lost much. Similarly, avoid the temptation to sign up for a 6 month or 12-month personal trainer contract.

**Don't let them charge your credit or debit card:** Insist on paying upfront for a specific number of months instead of letting them ding your credit card or debit card for the monthly charge. There have been a number of nightmare situations, where the member canceled his membership and the club refuses. Then the club keeps charging the member's card and even has a collection agency go after the member is he cancels the card. Over a decade ago, I visited a large health club chain. They wanted to charge my credit card. I refused and paid upfront by check for a trial 3-month membership.

**Use a city-owned facility:** There are a number of city-owned facilities, such as the Mesa Multigenerational Center or the Gilbert Freestone Recreation Center that offer workout facilities. Kiwanis Park in Tempe also has tennis courts and a large indoor heated pool. The normal daily admission cost is \$4-6 and one can lower the cost with a monthly pass. For years, I trained my championship tennis teams at Kiwanis Park. Unlike a high-end country club, there was not \$thousands of dollars upfront in an initiation fee and high monthly dues. When we played doubles for 2 hours, each guy would chip in \$4-5.

Due to a number of major injuries, I can no longer play tennis. So, I use the Kiwanis Park indoor heated pool and occasionally the small workout facility that has exercise machines. The cost is either \$4 per daily visit or \$39 for a monthly pass. I find that the city-owned facilities are much more low-key than private health clubs. Industry studies show that when people are out of shape, there's a huge reluctance to join a health club. This is because most women are intimidated by younger, thinner women wearing the latest fashions in the aerobics classes; and most men are intimidated by hugely muscled guys, known in the trade as "meatheads". I find that at city-

owned facilities, you mainly have an older crowd, where people are just trying to stay healthy and no one is competing with anyone else.

**Conclusion:** Your health is important, but spend wisely when using a facility to work out. Remember, what's important is not the cost of the facility but how often you exercise. It's you and not your wallet size that does the exercise.

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