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“My clients typically have ridiculously busy lives,” says Sarah Mulaner, owner of Imagine Fitness. “So they exercise by appointment, the same way they do everything else.” Once you’ve decided to get into shape, having an appointment as motivation is one advantage of hiring a personal trainer like Mulaner. Studies show you’ll get better results much faster than if you join a local gym and work out on your own.

Benefits include scheduling appointments only as needed and you can work out with a spouse or friends, reducing the cost per session. Qualified personal trainers teach you how to perform exercises correctly and use equipment safely. In 10 or 12 sessions, you should be able to continue on your own, Mulaner says.

Before you get started, expect a trainer to evaluate your current physical status. This can include basic measurements, tests and a review of your medical history.

If you have a specific goal, whether it’s running the Boston Marathon or shaving a few strokes off your golf game, your personal trainer designs a program to help you reach it. This information makes your program, well, personal.

Mulaner, who started her business in 2006, has 10-12 trainers working for her any one time throughout the GTA and Hamilton area. Her services include fitness studios in Oakville and Burlington as well as in-home appointments.

She earned her personal trainer certification in 1995 from the American Council on Exercise (ACE), a leading North American certification organization. Expect a personal trainer to be certified by ACE or another recognized group, such as Can-Fit-Pro, a Canadian fitness organization. After initially certifying a trainer, these organizations require regular recertification.

Both trainers emphasize how attaining physical fitness enhances your life. Exercise can fit into your lifestyle now matter what,” says Mulaner, whose youthful appearance shows she practices what she teaches. “Make a little bit of room to fit it into your life.”

This is an excerpt...