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PRINTER VERSION | E-MAIL ARTICLE

Health, June 2004

Sweatiquette 101

by Maryann Hammers

5 golden rules for the gym—plus how to handle transgressors.

If you belong to a gym, you've no doubt been frustrated by members who hog the machines or leave the place in a sweaty mess. It's easy to point fingers, but you may not realize that your own conduct

could also be distracting or unpleasant—or downright rude. With so many people sharing close quarters and equipment, consideration and courtesies are critical. Tim Frost, a personal trainer at Riata Athletic Club in Austin, Texas, doesn't mince words: "Having body odor, leaving sweat streaks, filling up an entire water bottle while people line up behind you at the fountain, reading a book or magazine between sets while someone else waits to get on the machine—the list of transgressions is endless," he says.

Before you take one more step on the treadmill, consider these unspoken gym rules.

Don't gross out others. No one wants to follow in someone else's sweatprint. Use a towel to wipe seats and handles after you use them. Apply antiperspirant before you get on the cardio floor. Gym clothes should be modest enough to cover your private parts. Wash it between wearings, so it's odor-free. "I've seen people clear an entire row of cardio equipment—or an entire room for that matter," Frost says.

Share. "There is nothing wrong with doing three or more sets on a particular machine, says Cody Sipe, director of A.H. Ismail Center for Health, Exercise and Nutrition at Purdue University, Indiana. "But while you rest between sets, get up, so someone else can use it. And obey time limits on treadmills and other cardio equipment." Similarly, don't babysit medicine or stability balls, exercise mats, and other gear.

Silence, please. Turn off your cell phone and stash it in a locker. If you're chatting with a fellow gym member, keep it down.

Pick up after yourself. "No one appreciates a disorganized weight room," Sipe says. "Think of how frustrating it is for the person who has to go on a hunt for the 5-pound dumbbells." Put your gear and weights where they belong. "Many times I want to ask, 'You came to the gym to lift weights, but now you are too lazy to carry them back to the rack?'"



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Frost says.

Leave others in peace. Don't stare, Sipe says. "It's one of the top reasons many people avoid joining a gym," And refrain from commenting on how someone's workout; you don't need to offer unsolicited advice on how to improve form or do an exercise. If you have a question about how to use a machine, ask a staff member, not another gym-goer.

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