



Joining a Gym?

If weight loss or healthy living is a New Year's resolution, joining a gym may seem like a good place to start. Most fitness clubs offer deals and promotions to those who want to make good on their resolutions. Just like any other investment decision, selecting the right place to get in shape requires a little bit of leg work.

When considering a gym membership, keep these tips in mind:

- Make sure the health gym is currently registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Call our Consumer Assistance Center at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) to check registration status or to see if any complaints have been filed against the gym, or health studio, as referred to in Florida Statutes. If complaints are on file, ask how they have been resolved.
- Carefully read contracts and all the provisions prior to signing any agreement. Ask for clarification if there is something that you don't understand. Two common areas of concern are contract disputes and billing issues. Problems arise when consumers sign up for one year or more of personal training sessions, assuming that if a contract is canceled halfway through the year, payment for any unused sessions will be refunded. Depending on the terms of the contract, consumers may be billed for 50 percent of the remaining balance of the contract.
- A provision for a penalty-free cancellation (in writing) of the contract within three days of signing, excluding holidays and weekends, must be included in all contracts.
- Avoid long term commitments until there's an opportunity to use the gym and ensure it will meet your needs. While some gyms don't offer monthly memberships, some will. Others may require a commitment for one year, but with no large up-front payment. Shop around and ask questions.

Currently, there are more than 2,600 gyms registered with the department. Consumers are strongly encouraged to take the time to check into an establishment prior to signing any contracts.

Remember, we're here for you. For more information, visit our Business/Complaint Lookup at www.800helpfla.com or call 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) from within Florida, (850) 410-3800 from outside of Florida or 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) en Español.

