

# How Much Should You Spend On A Gym Membership?

Don't sweat high gym prices in 2019 with these tips.

by Kira Vermond Jan 2, 2019

Making a New Year's resolution this year? There's a good chance you've chosen "get in shape" or "tackle my finances" to start 2019 right. After all, personal fitness and setting financial goals are two of the most common resolutions at this time of year, according to an [Ipsos survey](#) conducted for GoodLife Fitness in Canada a couple of years ago.

The two resolutions aren't mutually exclusive, though. While some might opt to shell out \$190-\$205 per month (plus \$400 initiation fee) for a swishy, high-end gym like [Equinox](#) in Toronto or Vancouver, it's possible to trim your waistline and wallet at the same time come January by finding a more affordable health club – or ditching the gym entirely.

"The good news is that fitness is available at a lot of different price points," says [Alison Stafford](#), a certified financial planner and money coach for [Money Coaches Canada in Vancouver](#). "If it's a priority to get healthy, but it's a bit tight financially right now, there are options."

It's true. In the \$3-billion fitness club industry in Canada, it's possible to pay as little as 10 bucks each month (plus \$44 initiation fee) for a bare-bones chain gym such as [Fit 4 Less](#), about \$40 to \$60 for a mid-range option like the [YMCA](#) or an independent neighbourhood studio, and far, far more for a luxury gym offering cold eucalyptus towels and spa services.

Considering all the choices, exactly how much should you pay to get in shape for 2019?

Like anything else, it comes down to what you can afford – but perhaps more importantly, how much you'll actually use it too. Just consider the findings of research paper, "[Paying Not to Go to the Gym](#)." Economists discovered that members who chose a monthly contract costing \$70 attended the gym an average of 4.3 times per month – at a cost of a

little over \$17 per session. They would have been better off simply paying \$100 for a 10-visit pass instead. In fact, when people paid up for an annual pass, they overestimated how much they'd use the facilities by more than 70 per cent.

Stafford isn't surprised, saying it's important to take a moment to really consider a gym membership's value for money before signing the dotted line – even for a cheaper, cut-rate gym.

“If you're spending only 20 bucks, but you're never going to the gym, it's not really a good value,” she says.

Here are a few other issues to consider before signing up for a new gym membership, or even when deciding to stick with the one you have this year.

## **Are gyms really for you?**

Not everyone is cut out to be a gym rat. Even if “fitness” tops your resolution list for 2019, if pumping iron or doing downward dogs with 30 other sweaty people in a room holds no appeal for you, consider other options. Maybe that means starting a weekly walking group, joining a community soccer team or **doing yoga at home** with a YouTube video. (Hello – free.)

If you do decide to join a gym though, make sure you choose one that offers amenities you'll actually use. Need childcare? The Y is a good option. Can't imagine using a gym's steam room or sauna – ever? Find another one that doesn't offer those perks. It will probably be cheaper.

## **Consider pay-as-you-go classes**

Unlimited classes sound enticing, but as the research above shows, you're unlikely to make them work for you, even if you have the best of intentions on January 1. Fortunately, many

smaller gyms and fitness studios offer a no-commitment, pay-to-play option — you only pay for the classes you use.

Or simply pay the daily guest fee each time you work out for the first couple of months and gauge how often you go. Although you might pay a little more at first, if you discover you're only hitting the gym once a week anyway, you could save yourself a lot of money and hassle trying to get out of a contract in the long run.

## **Factor in all the expenses of getting in shape**

Don't forget that a gym's monthly membership fee is only one expense you'll pay to workout there. You'll likely be buying new clothing, shoes and maybe a water bottle, too. Then there's the gas for the car or transit costs. (Though, honestly, location is key — the closer the gym to your house or work, the more likely you'll be to work out). And that pesky initiation fee? See if the gym will consider lowering it for you (there's no harm in asking, particularly if other gyms in the area are offering promotions that waive it) or look out for no-initiation-fee January deals.

Whether you decide to join a gym or not this year, taking care of your health is important. Think of exercise as a long-term financial investment. Daily physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer – conditions that can keep you out of the workforce temporarily or permanently someday.

“Activity can make a big difference for longevity, ability to work – and enjoyment of life into the later years,” says Stafford.