

# FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Division of Consumer & Business Education

## How's That Work-Out Working Out? Tips on Buying Fitness Gear

The benefits of exercise are well-documented. Unfortunately, that's not always the case with advertising claims for work-out gear and exercise equipment. Ready to put your best foot forward in evaluating promises you see in ads? The Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency, offers these tips to separate fitness facts from physical fiction.

Some advertisers say – without evidence – that their shoes, clothing, equipment, or other exercise add-ons offer a quick, easy way to shape up and lose weight. The truth is, there's no such thing as a no-work, no-sweat way to a fit, healthy body. What really gets the job done is the exercise, not how you're geared up while working out.

Looking for fitness advice that hits the spot? Avoid promises of spot reduction. Losing weight in one problem area requires regular exercise that works the whole body. Promises to effortlessly burn a spare tire or melt fat from hips and thighs – without a regular work-out routine – should cause you to raise an eyebrow.

Be skeptical of before-and-after photos from “satisfied” customers. Their experiences may not reflect the results users get. As for those celebrity endorsements? They're no proof that the product will work as claimed, either. And what about the chiseled models in the ads? Is that six-pack the result of the product they're peddling – or months in the gym and years of healthy habits?

Shopping for work-out equipment? After you've evaluated the advertised claims – but before you buy – consider how the product fits your fitness goals. Basements, closets, and rec rooms are stocked with pricey purchases that just didn't suit the buyer's lifestyle. The only gear worth getting is something that will help you make a consistent commitment to conditioning. Before buying, give different kinds of equipment a test drive at a local gym, recreation center, or retailer.

Do the math. Some companies advertise “three easy payments of...” or “try it free for a month.” But if they're not up-front about the price, what else are they hiding? The advertised price may not include sales tax, shipping, and delivery charges. Ask about refund policies, factoring in restocking fees or how much it might cost to send something back.

Consider the source. That “gotta have it” fitness product may be available at a better price from a local retailer. Or perhaps you can pocket a few bucks by comparing prices online. The benefit of working out is the “work.” If a company claims it's just their product – and not your effort – that provides the benefit, keep walking. It's a sign their puffed-up ad claims could use some toning down.

### For More Information

The FTC works to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or get free information on consumer issues, visit [ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. Watch a video, *How to File a Complaint*, at [ftc.gov/video](http://ftc.gov/video) to learn more. The FTC enters consumer complaints into the Consumer Sentinel Network, a secure online database and investigative tool used by hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.