

Smart choices for your home gym

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(HealthDay)—Home exercise equipment has come a long way over the years. It's a great option if you're starting a fitness program and don't want to go to a gym or can't get to your gym often enough.

There's also the convenience of having your favorite piece of cardio equipment in your home, especially on bad weather days.

Whatever your reason, take steps to make sure that the machine is cost effective and that you're getting all the features you're used to at the gym or that you'll need to stay motivated at home.

There are different considerations for each type of machine. For instance, for real elliptical movement you need a rear-drive unit with an adjustable incline ramp at the front, the American College of Sports Medicine explains. Less expensive front-drive ellipticals often don't deliver a natural motion and may not feel comfortable to you.

There are equally big differences between electronic stair steppers and manual ones, and between manual and motorized treadmills, for which a 3-horsepower motor is best. Check out the range of built-in speed adjustments. If you're a beginner, the machine should be able to progress with you; if you're a seasoned user, it should have enough settings to keep you challenged for the long term.

Next, determine what bells and whistles are important to you, such as preset programs, a large display, and possibly connectivity that allows you to participate in a virtual class.

Some considerations are the same for any machine. Check that your floor can support its weight, and that it can support your weight—some [machines](#) can only handle 250 to 300 pounds. Measure to see if you have enough floor space and ceiling height.

Shop around for the best warranty. That means at least one year of service and up to three years of replacement parts.

Finally, keep in mind that good machines can cost \$1,000 or more. If

you can't afford quality equipment, your money may be better spent upgrading to an elite gym.

More information: Harvard Health has more tips for choosing the right [home equipment](#) for you.

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