

# Faith-based fitness programs: What's in it for you?

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(HealthDay)—Faith-based fitness is on the rise, according to trend-

watchers at the American Council on Exercise, with many churches, mosques, synagogues and temples developing programs that promote health and wellness.

From exercise classes to nutrition advice and health coaching, congregants can enhance their physical as well as their spiritual well-being.

More than just another fitness fad, research has found an explanation for the spirituality-wellness connection: The strong sense of community in faith-based programs can lead to fitness success. That's especially true when they include partnerships with health organizations, local hospitals, medical schools and other access to [medical experts](#), and when they promote positive behavioral changes and supportive social relationships.

These programs can instill a commitment among participants that exceeds that of a commercial diet group, for instance.

Studies show that traditional houses of worship tend to offer more disease screening and health education activities, while more modern ones tend to offer disease *prevention* and lifestyle activities to the community at large.

At their core, all such programs address fitness and [health issues](#) in a spiritual environment that may make it easier to change habits because of congregants' belief in their church's role in promoting health along with the ability to deepen bonds with fellow congregants.

If your religious institution offers [exercise classes](#), consider the role they can play in achieving your fitness goals and take the first step by signing up and making the commitment to at least a month of sessions to notice a difference.

**More information:** *Faith and Fitness Magazine* has information for starting a [fitness program](#) in your house of worship.

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