



## **Health Trends: Medically Supervised Fitness**

Nowadays it seems that every movie star has a personal fitness trainer. They're hired to help the actor put on weight or muscle for a particular role or character they were playing. Or, after filming, they were consulted again to help take the weight off, safely. Rene Zellweger and Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt and Robert DeNiro are among the famous names that relied on a trainer to whip them back – or into – shape.

The trend has trickled down to the masses. Most gyms now offer specialized services such as one-on-one sessions with a personal trainer. Some facilities take it a step further, offering medically supervised fitness programs for people of all ages and levels of fitness – even older persons and high-risk patients. Resistance or strength training, in particular, increases bone density, offers cardiovascular benefits and can improve extremity strength and reduce disabilities experienced by older stroke survivors.

In a medically supervised fitness program, certified personal trainers, often skilled in other health care areas such as physical therapy, evaluate the client's medical history, get a baseline for resting heart rate and blood pressure and design a customized exercise program. Clients are fitted with a heart monitor, instructed on its use and are taught how to do each exercise and operate the equipment. Then they are carefully supervised throughout their workout.

Some facilities offer detailed reports to chart progress in weight, body fat, energy level and mobility. That information can help physicians track the patient's fitness level and progress.

With the help of a qualified trainer, an older person who is reluctant to exercise for fear of injury will be able to do so safely under strict supervision and benefit from the added motivation, guidance and instruction. The added benefit: improved health and quality of life.