

Saving Your Own Life for Less Than \$1 a Day

Hastings, MN - May 8, 2008—How much would you be willing to pay to avoid having your life cut short by a terrible illness? Most people would say, "Anything!"

Jeff Bucher of Fond du Lac, Wis., believes the \$1 a day he began spending a little over a year ago saved his life.

Bucher's narrow escape began in November of 2006, shortly after his 41st birthday.

"I realized I was huffing and puffing every time I went up the stairs," Bucher says. "Finally, I decided enough was enough. It was time for me to join a gym and get in shape."

Bucher found the help he needed at an Anytime Fitness club near his office - and exercising quickly became a habit. The fastest-growing fitness club chain in America, known for its 24-hour gyms in small towns all over the country, offered precisely the amenities Bucher was looking for.

"The gym was quick and convenient for me," he says. "It had all sorts of free weights and treadmills, as well as elliptical and exercise machines, and dues were very affordable. After years of doing nothing, exercising just felt good. I found myself thinking about it all the time."

Weight loss helped detect cancer

In less than a year, Bucher lost 40 pounds of fat and gained 10 pounds of muscle -- and because he also acquired a new awareness of his body, he noticed an unusual growth in his pelvic region.

"My doctor diagnosed me with follicular lymphoma and said I was lucky," Bucher recalls. "Most people with my type of cancer don't realize they have it until it is stage three or four. By then, their prognosis is not good. My cancer was caught during stage one."

Bucher immediately began radiation treatments and within five weeks was cancer free.

"This case is a dramatic example of how becoming physically active can save your life. But for most people, exercise is a great way to prevent problems from cropping up in the first place," says Dr. Marc Manley, vice president and medical director for population health at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota.

"Being physically fit helped me endure the side effects of my treatment," Bucher says. "Now, more than ever, I'm determined to stay in shape, so that I'll notice any changes right away if the cancer returns."

Many insurance companies now offer their members an incentive for living healthy lifestyles. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, for example, reimburses \$20 of the monthly membership dues for members who work out at a qualified gym at least 12 times a month.

"The health benefits of physical activity are well-documented. People who exercise are more likely to maintain a lower weight, and our research shows they have lower health care costs than those who don't exercise regularly. So, from a business standpoint, it only makes sense to encourage people to exercise," says Dr. Manley.

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According to the American Heart Association, regular physical activity has many health benefits. Working out regularly can:

- Help to maintain a healthy weight;
- Reduce the risk of dying prematurely from heart disease and other conditions;
- Reduce the risk of developing diabetes;
- Reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure;
- Reduce blood pressure in people who already have high blood pressure;
- Reduce the risk of developing colon and breast cancer.

"I can't say enough about the importance of physical activity. People need to realize it's like the fountain of youth," says Dr. Manley.

Bucher is a true believer in that concept. "As soon as doctors told me it was okay for me to return to the gym, I couldn't wait to get in there and do some bench presses and lat pulls -- anything to release some endorphins. I just wanted to beat up the cancer."

"Exercising is the least expensive thing you can do to improve the quality of your own life," says Mark Daly, Anytime Fitness' national media director. "Our clubs don't have pools, racquetball courts, or saunas, but we do feature all the top-notch exercise equipment most people need. At Anytime Fitness, we're all about providing convenient and affordable fitness options for busy people who just want to get in, work out, and get on with their lives."

As for Jeff Bucher, he says his medical scare reaffirmed for him what's really important in life - his family and his health. That's why he recently expanded his Anytime Fitness club membership to include his wife and their four daughters. These days, it's not uncommon to see the entire Bucher family working out side-by-side on elliptical machines.

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About Anytime Fitness: Founded in 2002, Anytime Fitness now has nearly 800 clubs in 46 states. Monthly membership fees vary from club to club, but the fees at many Anytime Fitness clubs equate to less than \$1 a day - even less when you factor in insurance reimbursements. Based on their current growth rate, Daly expects Anytime Fitness to open its 1,000th club by the end of 2008. To find the location nearest you, log on to www.anytimefitness.com.