

PERSON OF FLAIR



Maya Nassar's Fitness Empire

Regional fitness celebrity Maya Nassar started her fitness journey like many of us—with a desire to get fit and healthy. After leading an unhealthy lifestyle for years she finally decided to turn her life around. However after reaching her goal of losing weight, and where many would have stopped and been happy with the results—Maya went even further. She turned her personal journey into a fully-fledged fitness empire. Over the years she has amassed over six trophies including the first place at the 2014 Pure Elite UK Championships in the bikini category. More recently she has launched a website, a fitness application, as well as her very own gym which opened earlier this year. With a TV show on MTV Lebanon as well, we chat with the “Bikini Babe” and the newly crowned mother of a one-month old about fitness, pregnancy and more...



MAYA'S TOP FITNESS TIPS

1. Lift Weights

Many women falsely believe that they will bulk up or look like man if they do, however this is a myth as women do not have enough testosterone in their bodies to become masculine. Weightlifting is the best way to shape and tone your body and the quickest way to burn fat.

2. Avoid Low Calorie Diets

Low calorie intake diets that require you to cut out a major food group such as carbohydrates should be avoided. The best diet to follow is one that is well-balanced and contains healthy, natural and unprocessed food. A diet must be sustainable in the long run and must not be restrictive. In order to lose weight, we simply need to eat a healthy diet of sufficient calories and burn more calories than we consume a day.

3. Avoid Diet Pill Scams

"Diet pills" and other form of diet scams that promise results with zero to no effort should not be trusted. These do not work and are entire scams. The only way to get into shape is through diet and exercise.

What initially got you into fitness?

After living a very unhealthy lifestyle in my early 20s, I had gained a significant amount of weight and became very insecure. I did not eat healthy and never did any exercise. I hit rock bottom and used to get sick very often, suffering from asthma and having difficulty breathing by just going up the stairs. When my jeans no longer fit and stopped at my knees, I decided I was responsible for my own lifestyle and had to do something to change. I did not want to be this way. That was my turning point when I joined a gym and changed my eating habits overnight. I researched and educated myself on the subject of fitness and what I needed to do to get into shape. As a result, I became healthier, happier, more confident and created the best version of myself.

What are some of the myths you want to dispel about fitness and pregnancy?

The first myth is that exercising is unsafe or dangerous during pregnancy. I lifted weights and exercised until the night before I gave birth. Lifting weights has helped to control my weight gain during pregnancy and also kept my skin tight so luckily I didn't get any stretch marks. The second myth is that a pregnant woman should eat for two. During pregnancy, a woman does not need more than 300 to 500 extra calories a day.

Why do you participate in fitness competitions and challenges?

After losing all the weight I gained, I decided I wanted to reach the ultimate goal

and this is when I decided I wanted to compete in fitness modeling competitions. I wanted to push to my limits both mentally and physically and go from being in the worst shape of my life to being in the best shape of my life. I was too insecure to walk on the beach and wanted to show off my physique on stage next to other fitness models. Competing has taught me many important lessons. It taught me that there is no such thing as failure, as I told myself that as long as I reached my best and participated, then I was a winner. It was not about winning or losing, though I am lucky to have won a total of 6 trophies over the last few years.

Tell us about your "Start Living Right Fitness" website and application...

I created a website called Start Living Right to provide others with free information to help them live a healthy lifestyle. I wanted to help anyone like my old self who was struggling with their weight and did not know how to start. My website contains advice, diet plans and exercise programs and was very well received. This inspired me to launch a mobile application of my website with more added features, including animated exercise illustrations, a calorie counter and more. My application is free download by searching for "startlivingright" in their smartphone stores.

What are your ambitions and upcoming plans for the future?

My main goal is to enter a fitness modeling competition next year. I want to show other women that I am a mother and

business owner and that if I can get into shape, then they can do it too. There is nothing holding them back.

What encouraging words would you give to people who want to start out their fitness journey?

The first step is to have the mental willpower to get started and to be willing to put in the hard work it takes. Getting into shape is a mental challenge and as long as they have the right mindset, then they will see the results they want. The second step is to follow a proper diet and exercise program. This can be by consulting a fitness professional or by doing their own research. My website and mobile application contain diet plans and exercise programs that anyone can follow and is tailored for different goals, whether someone wants to lose weight or build muscles. Anyone can get into shape if they want it bad enough!

