

Exercise comes home in style

Stories by Della De Lafuente
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Sales of home exercise equipment totaled \$5.23 billion in 2006, with treadmills accounting for more than half of those purchases, followed by multipurpose home-gym machines and stationary bikes, according to the Chicago-based National Sporting Goods Association.

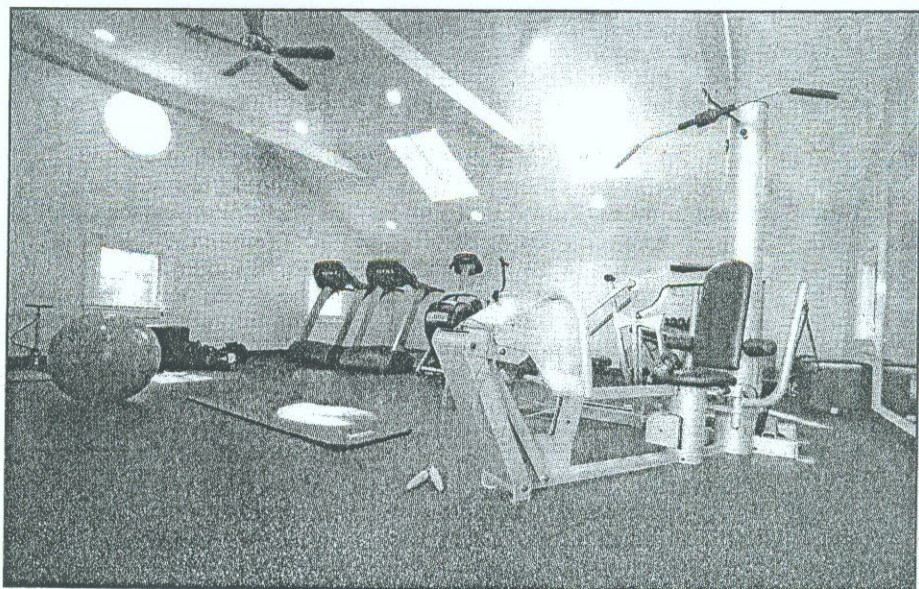
A lot of that equipment ends up in home gyms.

Ira Nathel of Old Brookville, N.Y., invested \$15,000 in fitness machines, including cardio equipment and rubber flooring.

The reason? Nathel said his 4:30 a.m. start to a 12-hour day as a buyer in the wholesale foods business wasn't conducive to the hours most gyms are open.

Now Nathel exercises at his leisure after he gets home from work, usually with his wife and their two daughters, ages 10 and 12. Relatives and friends also swing by to work out on one of two treadmills, an elliptical machine, a full-body workout machine and other things such as exercise balls, mats and jump ropes.

"Having it nearby — right here —



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Ira Nathel's home gym allows him to work out at his convenience.

makes it so much better," Nathel said.

Fortunately for homeowners considering an in-home gym, the quality of today's workout machines hasn't suffered as they've become more affordable.

"Whether it's new construction or a remodel of existing construction, the market for home gyms has grown as the cost of home-fitness equipment has gone down and the quality has gone up," said Behzad Amiri, director of marketing for Gym Source, a New York designer, consultant and retailer of home gyms and fitness equipment.

Amiri said the economic profile of the homeowner seeking to create a home gym has widened in recent years.

"It used to be that celebrities and captains of industries were the only people who could afford a home gym. Today

most of the VPs at those companies, and their assistants, can afford to put in a home gym and prefer to work out in their house."

For fitness fanatics Jason and Karen Taylor of Naples, Fla., putting a gym in their home was a lifelong dream. For years, the couple, who are into bodybuilding, worked out at one of two health-fitness chains in Naples.

But when one of the gyms focused its attention on family fitness, the Taylors sought another way to muscle up. Even though they thought an in-home gym might be out of reach for them financially, they were surprised to find they could afford it.

"We checked out the equipment," Jason Taylor said, "and said, 'Wow! We've got to have this.'"

What you need

Here are five basic pieces of exercise gear you'll need to get a health-club-quality workout at home, and what high-quality equipment costs:

- ▶ Elliptical machine: \$1,750 to \$6,500
- ▶ Treadmill: \$1,750 to \$6,500
- ▶ Home multigyms: \$1,500 to more than \$10,000

- ▶ Exercise bike: \$800 to \$3,000
- ▶ Free weights and flexibility equipment (including medicine ball and jump ropes): \$29 to \$4,500

THREE QUESTIONS

- ▶ Who will deliver, install and test my equipment?

- ▶ What kind of warranty am I getting? Reputable companies will have minimum parts and service warranties, so be sure you know the details.

- ▶ How will I get my machine serviced if something goes wrong?

Source: Gym Source