



# Be Happy at the Gym, Not Injured and Sick

May 13, 2010 by [Jenn](#)



I'm a huge fan of the gym. It's a place you can just zone out and focus on you. No unopened mail eyeballing you. No dirty laundry giving you the stink eye. No dirty dishes screaming to be scrubbed. Just you, some equipment and a few sweaty strangers (unless you're a social butterfly at your club, in which case—whatever works for you!). And while the gym is awesome, it does come with some interesting issues. From tripping on the treadmill to contracting a bad cold from the hand-held heart-rate monitors, there are some dangers lurking in the gym.

Thankfully, Stacy Berman, founder of [Stacy's Bootcamp](#), and [Tara Zimliki, founder of Tara's Bootcamp](#), have weighed in on some of the most treacherous aspects of the gym to give tips on how to break a sweat, not a bone—when at da club!

## Tips to Stay Safe at the Gym

**Stay on track—literally.** Reading a book or watching your favorite TV show while you are on the treadmill or elliptical seems like a great idea: It makes the time go by quicker, you're entertained, and you hardly feel like you're working out at all! Although reading or watching television can help the time go by quicker, don't allow yourself to zone out the entire time. Stacy suggests using breaks in chapters or commercials to create an interval workout: Keep a steady pace during your regular programming, then sprint for the duration of the commercials, or for 1-2 minutes between chapters if you are reading a book. This way you can "zone out" safely and still get a good workout in.

**Limit the cellie.** Chatting with your best friends while working out is not only annoying for those around you, it's pretty dangerous. Similar to driving and talking on a cell phone at the same time, you are not focused on the most important task at hand—staying on your cardio machine! Even when using a hands-free cell phone, being focused on a conversation will keep you from watching where you are stepping. Tara warns that texting while using machines is also a big no-no: "The likelihood of falling while walking and texting is great, whether you are on a treadmill or simply walking around your neighborhood! If you need to text, stop the machine." (Tara probably wouldn't be thrilled with [this](#) then, huh? Oops-a-daisy!)

**Beware the iPod.** Music is a fantastic motivator, as it can help you push through those difficult hills and energize you when you think you can't go any farther, but dropped iPods or tangled headphone cords can create accidents and can be a big distraction. Stacy suggests wearing your MP3 player on your body and tucking your headphone cords into your shirt if you can to allow you to freely swing your arms and move your legs. If you do drop your player, remember to always stop the machine before you get off to retrieve it. No iPod is worth a broken leg or sprained ankle!

**Wipe it off.** Everyone makes an effort to wipe down machines after they use them (or they should!), but what about hand weights and barbells? Bacteria can actually enter your body through tiny cuts on your hands and arms, so be careful when using these items. Tara suggests wiping them down with antibacterial spray or wipes before and after use. If you are using multiple sets of weights and/or don't have access to antibacterial spray, use weight-lifting gloves to protect your hands, just make sure you wash them often!

**Cover up.** Wearing flip-flops in the shower and sitting on a clean towel while changing in the locker room can help prevent plantar warts on your feet and infections in your skin. Areas such as saunas and steam rooms are also breeding grounds for bacteria, thanks to the warm, moist environment. (Moist. Ewww...) If you want to enjoy them, be sure to use a clean towel to sit on, and don't use the same towel you sat on to wipe down your body later on. Gross!

A big thanks to Stacy and Tara for the tips! How do you stay safe and clean at the gym? —*Jenn*