**‘Tis the Season to be Shopping!**

Many of you are in the shopping mode these days and you are looking for some great ideas that can nurture and help promote healthy lifestyles for yourself or for someone you love. Giving the gift of health can be very difficult to do and could be pricey if you allow it to be. So, in the spirit of the season, I thought I could give you some shopping suggestions that I believe any fitness enthusiast would enjoy receiving.

What about a gift certificate to their favorite workout facility? I make this suggestion to many spouses and kids who are looking for the perfect gift. Particularly if the person they are buying for is a regular exercise participant. What better way is there to spoil your loved one then by giving them a month or more at a facility they already attend?

Most individuals do better at exercise and fitness when they belong to a health club. The reasons behind this are numerous but they include: the issue of getting out of the house and going to exercise, there’s a social component, there is more accountability with arriving at a health club and meeting up with friends (or others who exercise the same time of day that they do), health clubs provide more variety that will help combat boredom and encourage better successes with their workout, there are (or are supposed to be) professionals at a health club that will help you and assist you when needed. You can get more for your money at a health club than that same money put into home exercise equipment.

Looking for something that you can wrap up and put under the Christmas tree? What about a good pair of walking and/or cross training shoes? There is no better piece of exercise equipment than your feet and making them move.

What about exercise/work-out clothing? “There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad gear,” including workout gloves, socks, headbands/hats/caps, sports bra’s, sun glasses, workout bags, wind breakers, etc. So, don’t just think about spandex and tank tops.

Looking for a gadget? How about purchasing a workout monitor of some sort? They are one of the most effective devices for encouraging proper exercise by; making sure that you are within the heart rate zone that will give you the best results, they make sure you are not wasting your time and efforts, some of them even calculate calories expenditure and steps taken all day long, which can be fun to monitor. They can be worn all day long for everything you do.

Gifts that are $50 or less include;

Stability balls, those large (usually colorful) balls that are used for various exercise routines often come with a video workout that can be followed at home.

Resistance bands/tubing, a way to perform strength training activities in the home and they usually will come with a video to follow.

Exercise/fitness books or a magazine subscription that will keep them up to date in the fitness world is a great gift idea.

Individuals who enjoy Yoga or Pilates might be in need of a specific exercise matt or band for their class.

Individuals who need a little boost in their home strength training might be in need of various dumbbells that will allow them some strength training advances.

My personal favorite is a “roller” that you can use to help those tired, tight and sore muscles.

If you are looking to buy a large piece of exercise equipment (i.e. treadmill, elliptical, bike, rower), make sure that you try it out before you buy it. If the price is cheap, the unit probably is too. Size of equipment, how much it will be used, the size of the individuals using the equipment, where the unit is placed, warranty opportunities and service availability are important issues to be addressed when buying home exercise equipment. I encourage you to try out equipment at an authorized home exercise equipment store, before buying it. Go where the sales people know the equipment.

The best gift of all could come from you simply exercising with them. Giving your family/friends a healthy you, would honestly be a perfect gift.