



Resolve to Make a Wise Fitness Membership Decision

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MADISON – The new year is upon us and consumers across Wisconsin will join a fitness center in order to work toward a resolution of better health in 2013. With a wide array of choices in this market, how can you make certain that the option you choose is the safest bet for your money? The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) suggests that consumers do their homework before signing a new contract or making a down payment to a fitness or weight reduction center.

Gyms and weight reduction centers are likely to roll out a number of promotions over the coming weeks, and most will come with a strict deadline within which to enroll. Take the time to visit a number of possible centers and do not be swayed by high-pressure pitches. If you intend to join a gym or start a weight program, make sure to get the membership information in writing. If an issue arises over the terms of the membership, this documentation will be your proof of the original agreement.

Wisconsin consumers are protected by state laws regulating both fitness and weight reduction centers:

- **Fitness Centers**

- All memberships must have an expiration date, and memberships cannot be sold for a period greater than two years.
- If a center collects more than \$100 in advance of providing services, it is required to have a \$25,000 form of financial responsibility filed with the state or proof of funds held in an escrow account.
- Fitness center contracts must include a three-day cancellation right. Consumers regretting a membership purchase must put their cancellation request in writing.
- Fitness centers must have CPR-trained staff onsite during all business hours. If such staff is not onsite while the business is open (as is the case with some 24-hour gyms), the business must conspicuously post a sign informing members of this situation.

- **Weight Reduction Centers**

- Memberships cannot exceed two years unless the contract includes a weight maintenance program. In this case, the contract can be extended to a period not to exceed three years.
- The full price of the membership must be disclosed, including any interest or other charges.
- Weight reduction centers requiring members to pay more than \$100 in advance fees are required to establish proof of financial responsibility with the state.
- New members must be informed of their three-day right to cancel.

Consumers can contact DATCP's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128 to inquire about complaints against fitness or weight reduction centers and to make sure the centers have provided proof of financial responsibility.

For more consumer information, visit datcp.wisconsin.gov, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or connect with us on Facebook at [facebook.com/wiconsumer](https://www.facebook.com/wiconsumer).