

CityFitness Announcement Press Release



NZ Largest Gym Chain Responds to spike in Youth working out

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Following the isolation of COVID-19, membership among rangatahi aged 15–17 rose from 22% in 2021 to 30% in 2024/25. CityFitness is taking steps to help this younger generation begin their fitness journey safely. Chief Operating Officer Doug Hatten says that, although under-18s remain a minority of overall membership, the increase in young people working out is noticeable.

It reflects a broader interest in working out among young New Zealanders. Sport NZ's 2024/25 survey data shows that working out was also the number one activity this age group wanted to do more of or try for the first time.

Hatten says seeing more young people taking an interest in exercise is a positive shift. With 43% of kids in NZ not meeting the World Health Organizations recommendation for physical activity, any increase in kids exercising should be applauded and encouraged". Benefits range from improved strength and endurance, improved confidence and self-esteem, and greater social connection in an overly digital world.

"But simply providing access to a gym isn't enough. With more young people coming into our clubs, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to give them the knowledge and confidence to train safely, get the most out of their membership and understand what it means to be part of a gym community".

While the benefits of being more physically active are unquestioned, the consequences of exercising improperly can't be ignored.

Hatten has worked internationally across all areas of the health and fitness sector for more than three decades and has educated thousands of personal trainers on training, coaching and behaviour principles.

He says the gym can provide a positive outlet for teenagers wanting to improve their strength, fitness and confidence, but younger members need sound guidance from the outset.

A different generation of gym users

Social media has fundamentally changed how young people develop ideas about health and fitness and while there is some great information available, what works for an experienced adult, athlete or fitness content creator isn't necessarily appropriate for a 14 or 15-year-old entering a gym for the first time. Trends like looksmaxxing can create unhealthy and unrealistic expectations and habits and it's important that teenagers establish healthy habits early.

He says establishing appropriate exercise behaviours early is particularly important because habits formed when somebody first begins training can remain with them for years. "If somebody learns good technique, sensible progression and realistic expectations from the start, you are building positive lifelong habits. If they begin with poor technique, excessive training or unrealistic expectations about how quickly their body should change, those behaviours can also become ingrained".

This spring, CityFitness will introduce a compulsory Youth Induction Programme for all new members aged 14 and 15, which must be successfully completed before they can join as a member.

The programme will provide practical guidance on how to train safely and effectively, while also helping young people understand the Club Rules and shared responsibilities that come with training in a busy gym environment.

For many young people, working out is also social. Training with friends can make an unfamiliar gym less intimidating, provide motivation and make exercise more enjoyable.

But Hatten says learning to train in a shared environment is just as important as learning how to use the equipment. Just being in a gym doesn't create results. It's about understanding how to use the facility efficiently and effectively.

"A gym is a shared space. Every member, regardless of age, has a responsibility to respect the people and environment around them.

"For someone entering a gym for the first time, things like returning your weights, cleaning equipment, allowing others to work in or being aware of how long you've been using a piece of equipment aren't necessarily things you automatically know.

"That's why we want to set those expectations from the beginning."

The small-group induction will cover exercise selection, correct technique, appropriate rest, safe spotting, and following a structured workout, alongside CityFitness' Club Rules and expectations for training respectfully in a shared gym environment.

Sessions will be held twice each month. Young people aged 14 and 15 will need to visit their local CityFitness club with a parent or guardian to register and must successfully complete the induction before they can join.

“We want young people in our gyms to succeed. Exercise can play an incredibly positive role in their physical health, confidence, wellbeing and social connection,” says Hatten.

“Our role is to help them start the right way, build positive training habits, get the most out of their membership and understand the shared responsibilities that come with being part of a gym community.”



Figure 1: Young gym members at CityFitness

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More information

You can find more information about CityFitness and membership options on our website:

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Notes to the Editor

CityFitness is New Zealand's largest fitness provider, operating 65+ locations nationwide and serving more than 250,000 kiwis. CityFitness offers accessible, and affordable high-quality fitness experiences

through its CityFitness and Simplicity Fitness clubs, supporting members in building strength, confidence, and lifelong wellbeing.

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