

Spas, courses enroll more

By Rose Fitzpatrick

Increasing awareness of health and physical fitness takes many forms; from sweating it out at a health spa to "stress management."

Evidence of the health trend is abundant in Lincoln: Enrollment has increased at the YMCA and YWCA, two health spas have opened in the past two years, two racquetball clubs have been built in the last four years and schools are enrolling more students in health and physical fitness courses.

Paul Gradt, manager of the Lincoln YMCA, said the increasing interest in health and physical fitness can be attributed to increasing concern with the quality of life and the benefits gained from being physically fit.

Being fit at Sweep Left means joining the Health Spa, which specializes in weight training, said Andrew Fry, manager. The two and one-half-year-old club has a little more than 100 members, which includes everyone from competitive weightlifters to people who are just in it for fun, he said.

The Body Shoppe health club's clients number about 225 a day, said an employee.

Racquetball popular

Racquetball also is growing in popularity.

An employee at Sports Courts said the club has 1,800 members after four years of existence.

Wallbangers racquetball club began in August of 1978 and now has 1,100 members, manager David Putensen, said.

Racquetball also is one of the most popular activities at the YMCA, according to Paul Gradt.

Gradt said there are 8,840 members in the YMCA, including both the northeast and downtown branches.

At the YWCA, swimming and aerobics draw a lot of participants, said Clareline Hawk. She said the YWCA had to add some aerobics classes and now has 10, which meet twice a week.

High school students too

She said there are about 5,000 YWCA members, an increase of about 150 in the last 10 years.

In Lincoln high schools, many students are taking physical fitness courses beyond the required number of courses, said Dean Austin, director of health and physical fitness for Lincoln Public Schools.

Students interests vary from weight training to aerobics to golf, Austin said. Interest in fitness has increased interest in diet and stress management, he added.

Austin said there is a course required for seniors that teaches health is a personal responsibility and emphasizes the inter-relationship of fitness, diet, and stress management.

At UNL, "Healthy Lifestyles" has about 100 students, instructor John Scheer said. This is the third semester the elective course has been offered.

Students sign an exercise contract for fitness development and study nutrition, stress management, time management, the adverse effects of alcohol and smoking, and the relationship of mental health and disease to fitness.

Costs of doctor visits eliminated with HMOS

By Lori McGinnis

Imagine waking up one morning with a swollen jaw, stiff neck, headache and sore throat. A visit to the doctor is considered. But as the thought of a doctor bill snaps into your already throbbing head, you abandon the idea, thinking your ailment will go away.

It may go away, but then again it may not. With a membership in a health maintenance organization, (HMO), you need not worry about the cost of visiting a doctor.

An HMO is similar to an insurance company except members don't file claims, said Sheryl Bellinger, marketing director for Health Central, 17th and N streets in Lincoln. For a monthly fee, members can obtain a doctor's care for no additional cost, she said.

The rates of an HMO are comparable to that of an insurance company, Bellinger said, but HMO benefits are more comprehensive.

Covers exams

Membership in an HMO will cover almost all medical care, even preventive care, such as immunizations, eye exams and physical exams.

Insurance companies are cooperative with HMOs, she said, "But I'm sure they see us as competition."

Health Central, Nebraska's only HMO, opened Feb. 1, 1979. It is one of 230 across the nation, some of which started operation 50 years ago.

Health Central is a private, non-profit organization, operated by a board of directors, she said, with a present membership of 8,000. The capacity of Health Central is 25,000 patients and Bellinger expects it to reach that number in eight or 10 years.

The formation of HMOs are a definite trend for the 1980s, she claim-

ed. As more people search for ways to combat skyrocketing medical care costs, the number of HMOs will increase, she said.

"HMOs do have a history of keeping down health care costs."

Kaiser-Permanente, an HMO in California, has provided its members with a 10 to 40 percent savings in health care costs, Bellinger said.

Two types

There are two types of membership in Health Central: individual and group. An individual must pass a test to determine his or her health before membership is allowed, she said.

The bulk of Health Central's membership is in groups. Health Central solicits throughout Lincoln organizations for members. UNL employees were approached last April and May, she said, and about 18 percent joined. In a group membership, the employer may pay for part or all of the employees premiums, she said.

Health Central has six physicians, three physician's assistants and four nurses. The doctors are family practitioners, who can handle almost any medical need, she said.

If a doctor can't provide a service a patient needs, such as surgery, the patient will be referred to a doctor who can.

Still pays

Health Central still will pay the bill, she said.

About 20 percent of Health Central's cases are referred to other doctors, Bellinger said. Health Central will also pay for hospital visits.

Some people have claimed health central is a move toward socialized medicine, Bellinger said.

"Many people think we are socialized medicine, but we're not," she said.

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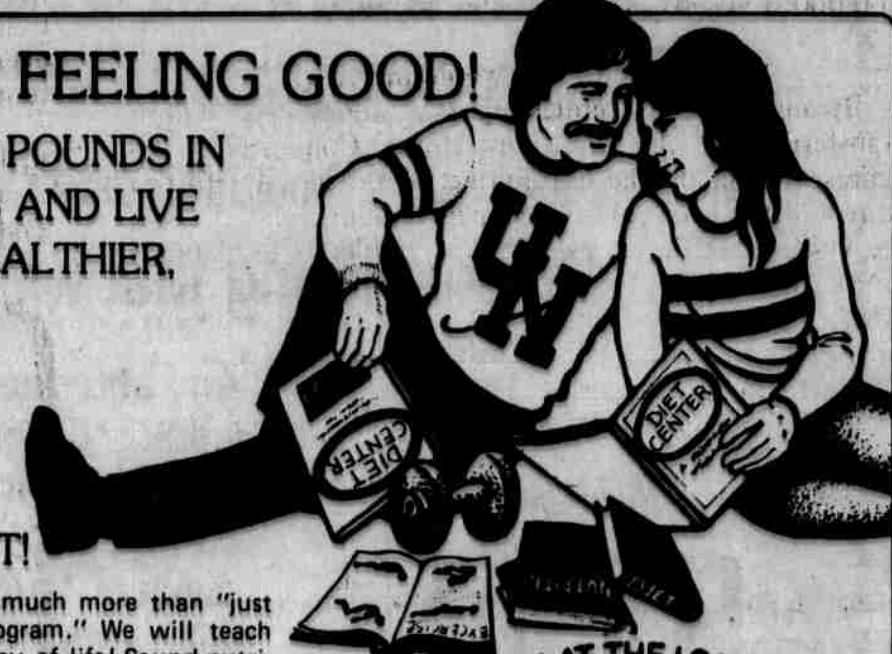
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