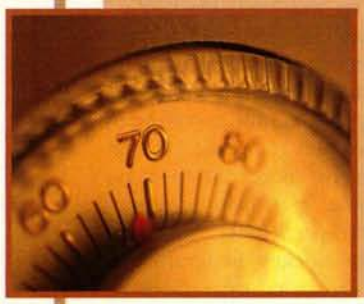
universityQ&A

By Matt Brzycki

What is a suitable temperature and humidity for a fitness center?

It's important to maintain a comfortable environment in a fitness center to minimize the risk of heat-related injuries. When exercising, your core temperature increases, and triggers several heat-loss mechanisms. Unfortunately, the body's cooling mechanisms don't work well when the heat and/or humidity is high. This situation causes the body to overheat, and may result in thermoregulatory problems. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that a fitness center be kept at a temperature of 68 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit, and the humidity to be no more than 60 percent.



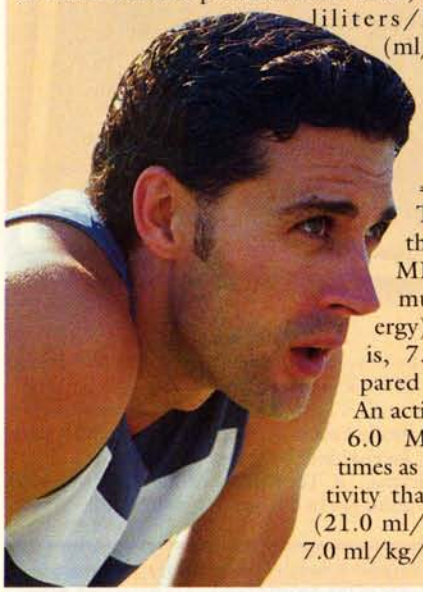
> "Proper footwear should be required in the fitness center, and signage should be posted to that effect."

Is it inappropriate for patrons to wear sandals in the fitness center?

It should be standard policy that patrons be prohibited from working out in sandals, flip flops, socks without shoes or, worse, bare feet. One reason for this is safety. Athletic shoes — such as sneakers — offer much more structural support. In addition, feet are more protected when they are completely covered with footwear. For example, wearing sneakers reduces the risk of stubbing the toes or cutting the foot on a sharp object. And while sneakers may not offer much more protection than sandals if a weight is dropped on a foot, the severity of injury would certainly be much less. Finally, feet should be completely covered to eliminate the risk of incurring tinea pedis, a fungal infection that's more commonly known as athlete's foot. Essentially, athletic shoes will act as a protective barrier. The bottom line is that proper footwear should be required in the fitness center at all times, and signage should be posted to that effect.

What does MET mean on the console of the cardio equipment?

"MET" stands for "metabolic equivalent." It's one of several ways that can be used to quantify oxygen intake (and caloric/energy expenditure) during an activity, and to devise exercise prescriptions. Simply, a MET is a multiple of oxygen intake while at rest. The amount of oxygen consumed while at rest in a seated position is 1.0 MET, which is about 3.5 milliliters/kilogram/minute (ml/kg/min). A level of 2.0 METs is equal to an oxygen intake of 7.0 ml/kg/min [3.5 ml/kg/min x 2.0 = 7.0 ml/kg/min]. Therefore, an activity that has a value of 2.0 METs requires twice as much oxygen (or energy) as complete rest (that is, 7.0 ml/kg/min compared to 3.5 ml/kg/min). An activity that has a value of 6.0 METs requires three times as much oxygen as an activity that requires 2.0 METs (21.0 ml/kg/min compared to 7.0 ml/kg/min).



What's the best lubricant for guide rods on selectorized machines?

Guide rods should be lubricated on a regular basis to protect against friction and wear. It's not uncommon for people to use WD-40 as a lubricant. WD-40 is good for cleaning guide rods, but there are other products that are better. The best lubricant to use on guide rods is a product that contains Teflon (wet, not dry). Equally important, however, is the application of the product. For best results, hold a rag in one hand and place it behind the guide rod to catch the overspray. Using your other hand, spray the rod with a light coat of the lubricant, and quickly wipe it off with the rag. Leaving a heavy film of lubricant on the guide rods tends to attract dust, which will eventually develop into "gunk" or "gum." And don't let the lubricant run down the guide rod, since it can seep between plates and cause them to stick together. **FM**

Matt Brzycki is coordinator of recreational fitness and wellness programs at Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. He has more than 20 years of experience at the collegiate level, and has authored, co-authored or edited eight books.

Do you have questions that you need answered? Email them to edit@fitnessmgmt.com.