



City of New York
Parks & Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, June 6, 2011

Health and Parks Departments Encourage New Yorkers to “Make NYC Your Gym”

*Weeklong celebration of fitness launches with Expanded BeFitNYC
“Free and Low-Cost Fitness” Search Engine on NYC.gov*

June 6, 2011– The Health Department and the Department of Parks & Recreation today kicked off “Make NYC Your Gym” week, a campaign to get New Yorkers moving by highlighting the vast array of fitness opportunities outside their doorsteps. Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs, along with Health Commissioner Thomas Farley, Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar, General Manager/Vice President for Downstate Sales for Empire BlueCross BlueShield Patrick O’Keefe, and Carol Espel, National Director of Group Fitness for Equinox Fitness Clubs celebrated the launch of the week at an open-to-the-public Zumba exercise class in Madison Square Park today. Physical activity events are planned throughout the five boroughs all week. To coincide with the weeklong initiative, the City has transformed its BeFitNYC fitness search engine -- available through NYC.gov -- to be a one-stop shop for finding free or low-cost fitness activities throughout the City. And for the first time, through integration of BeFitNYC with a Facebook app, New Yorkers can create their own events and either invite friends or open it up to others.

Nearly 30% of city residents report engaging in no physical activity. Through its contribution to heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes, physical *inactivity* kills an estimated 6,300 New Yorkers each year. In addition to reducing one’s risk of disease, staying active helps to maintain healthy weight, strengthen bones and muscles and improve mood.

“Exercise is so much easier and more fun to do with friends. BeFitNYC is a tool that makes it easy for me to invite friends to meet up for regular exercise,” said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. “My regular yoga classes and volleyball group can set our dates through this easy-to-use site. The ‘meet-up’ function will help us keep each other honest by making sure we show up and we’ll all be the healthier for it. I encourage all New Yorkers to challenge their friends to use BeFitNYC to join fitness activities or create their own events.”

“Physical activity plays an important role in both physical and mental health, yet most New Yorkers are not getting nearly enough of it,” said Commissioner Farley. “Exercise, even as simple as walking 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, can reduce your risk of a number of chronic diseases, including high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, some forms of cancer and osteoporosis. Through BeFitNYC, I encourage New Yorkers to join me, Deputy Mayor Gibbs and other City officials in this communal effort to join or lead a fitness group. We hope that our involvement will show by example just how fun and rewarding these types of activities can be.”

“New York City is the ultimate gym,” said Commissioner Benepe. “New York has hundreds of parks, playing fields and athletic facilities along with thousands of miles of sidewalks, walkways and bike lanes. I challenge all New Yorkers to get outside this summer and get active.”

"This initiative is a great opportunity for New Yorkers to become more physically active and healthier and that's good for them and their families," said HRA Commissioner Robert Doar. "And it's also good for the City because it will help lead to lower health care costs."

“Empire BlueCross BlueShield is very pleased to partner with the Parks Department to bring ShapeUp NYC and WALK NYC to New Yorkers, said Patrick O’Keefe. “Shape Up allows all New Yorkers to get to a professionally instructed exercise class in their local community. The two programs combine both the health benefits associated with the simple act of walking and exercising -- controlling blood pressure, lowering risk of heart disease, diabetes and strokes, and weight loss -- with opportunities to explore and enjoy the beauty of New York City’s parks or remain close to home. Our goal is to get New Yorkers actively moving toward better health and these programs will help get us there.”

Carol Espel, National Director of Group Fitness, Equinox said, “We are so thrilled to be partners in such a meaningful and powerful program as Shape Up NYC. To offer over 180 classes weekly, free of charge to all New Yorkers in EVERY borough brings accessible movement, fitness and good health to all in such a fun and motivating way!"

In addition to getting physical activity through organized fitness classes, the Make NYC Your Gym campaign reminds New Yorkers that even everyday tasks can present easy ways to get fit. For example, New Yorkers can walk or bike to work or school or to run errands. Residents can take public transportation and get off a stop or two before their destination and walk the rest of the way. Climbing the stairs instead of using the elevator or escalator is another readily available way to incorporate physical activity into daily routines.

New Yorkers looking to be active alongside other members of their community can search BeFitNYC on NYC.gov or download a new Facebook app to find or organize a wide range of free and low-cost classes and groups, such as WalkNYC fitness walks, yoga meet-ups, after-work runs and free Shape Up NYC fitness classes. BeFitNYC allows all New Yorkers to create their own fitness events and invite friends to join them through Facebook. The Health Department is inviting all New Yorkers to create their own fitness events over the next eight weeks through BeFitNYC.

Please see a list of the week’s events below. More information on Make NYC Your Gym and BeFitNYC launch week activities can be found at www.nyc.gov.

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Make NYC Your Gym Events

Monday, June 6, 2011, 11 a.m Press Conference; 11:30 Zumba Fitness Activity

Make New York City Your Gym Kick-Off and Celebration of Expanded BeFitNYC Website
Madison Square Park

Tuesday, June 7

Cardio While Commuting in Staten Island

North Concourse, Staten Island Ferry Terminal

8 a.m. – 9 a.m.

Learn how to stay fit while waiting for the Ferry!

Wednesday, June 8

Take the BeFitNYC Challenge! In Manhattan

163 West 125th St, Adam Clayton Powell State Office Building Plaza

3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Come take the BeFitNYC Fitness Challenge, complete with jump ropes, hula hoops and other fun activities!

Thursday, June 9

WalkNYC Fitness Walk at St. James Park

Start at St. James Recreation Center, 2530 Jerome Ave, Bronx

10 a.m. -11 a.m.

Make NYC Your Gym with an hour-long walk around St. James Park in the Bronx.

Friday, June 10

Shape Up NYC Class in Brooklyn

St. John's Recreation Center, 1251 Prospect Place, Brooklyn

11 a.m. – Noon

Come out to St. John's Recreation Center and end the week with a workout led by an Equinox fitness instructor.

Saturday, June 11

Outdoor Shape Up NYC Zumba class in Flushing Meadows Park, Queens

Flushing Meadow Park , just outside Al Qerter Recreation Center, 131-40 Fowler Ave, Queens

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Enjoy the outdoors while working out your ears! Take a zumba class in Flushing Meadows Park!

Sunday, June 12

BeFitNYC Fitness Festival in Washington Square Park

Washington Square Park, Manhattan

11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

As the grand finale of Make NYC Your Gym week, the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene and NYC Parks, in partnership with Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield, will host the BeFitNYC Fitness Festival showcasing some of the greatest fitness findings in all of NYC, including: Zumba, Intensati & other

ShapeUpNYC classes led by Equinox, Intro to Quidditch, Running Analysis by JackRabbit Sports, Handcycling demonstrations and a MillionTreesNYC Watering Blitz.

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