

# The Fitness Industry's Historic Shift: Since COVID-19, People Exercise For Health Instead of Aesthetics

For the longest time, the fitness industry had been driven largely by aesthetics. Many people were primarily [after](#) those elusive six-pack abs, defined triceps, and sculpted thighs. But when the pandemic hit in 2020, it forced all of us to reevaluate our priorities, especially when it comes to our health. What we're seeing now is perhaps the largest shift we've ever experienced when it comes to personal exercise motivation. For the first time, more people are demonstrably concerned with the health of their bodies than the aesthetics of its surface.

We have always been aware of the way we look. In the midst of a pandemic, however, we have become aware – in some cases uncomfortably so – of our internal health, especially our immune system. More than ever, people are thinking about ways to strengthen their own body's defenses through lifestyle and diet changes. It also means people are changing their motivations when it comes to exercise.

For gyms to remain successful, they must shift their focus from providing equipment and training for aesthetic purposes to promoting a health-based workout regimen for members. That doesn't stop at cardiovascular health, as is already a common goal in many fitness programs: Now people want workouts that convey immunity and target other comorbidities, that put them in a risk category when disease strikes.

In order for our industry to survive this change in demand, we need to deliver on the promise of better immune defense and adjust our offering to achieve this health goal, rather than seeing the topic of immunity as a pure marketing opportunity.

## A Historic Shift

*We've looked at members working out on EGYM equipment that were active since gyms were gradually allowed to reopen in the DACH region (since 05/11/20) until the end of CW29. We distinguish between members that selected their training program after the reopening vs. before. To aid the analysis, we've grouped our training goals into three categories based on the sports science behind them: (1) aesthetics (training programs: "Muscle Building", "Weight Loss", "Body Shaping"), (2) health (training programs: "General Fitness", "Metabolic Fit", "Rehab Fit", "Immunity Boost"), and (3) performance (training program: "Athletic"). Here are the remarkable results: The data shows a clear shifting of priorities towards health. People want to especially support their immune system more than anything else.*

### Goals selected prior to the pandemic:

**63% aesthetics, 33% health**

Looking at members that were active after the lockdown and selected their training program on EGYM equipment prior to the pandemic, aesthetics was the primary training goal of users:

- 63% of people listed aesthetics as their primary fitness objective.

- Meanwhile, a mere 33% of people selected health as their primary goal.
- The remaining 4% were exercising for performance.

## **Goals selected since gyms started reopening: 53% health, 44% aesthetics**

Looking at members that have selected their training program since gyms reopened:

- Only 44% of members listed aesthetics as a primary goal.
- Health within this group is the most popular goal at 53%.
- The share of members exercising for performance remained rather steady with 3%.

Particularly the new Immunity Boost training program attracted a whopping 33% of users that selected a new training program since the reopening. This indicates that people are specifically interested in immune health. Offering a program like this at your gym could fundamentally increase your client base.

While the Immunity Boost program gained interest, the “all-time favorite” Muscle Building program saw a stark decrease. Comparing active members that selected their training program before vs. after the lockdown makes this transparent: 23% of active users enrolled in it before the pandemic vs. 18% once the pandemic took hold. The numbers are crystal clear: aesthetics are no longer the main priority. Instead, people want to exercise in order to improve their defenses against infection.

This is where fitness and health facilities such as gyms come in and can start to play a crucial societal role. Many people don't know how to exercise in a way that will promote immune health. Specific programs designed to boost immune health and general physical strength can be a great way to encourage users to join your gym and visit regularly.

## **Training For the Immune System**

The body's first line of defense against infection is a strong immune system supported by a healthy lifestyle. This includes staying hydrated, eating well, and of course, exercising regularly. [Research shows](#) that physical activity helps flush bacteria out of the lungs and airways, and slows the release of stress hormones which can increase the chance of illness. While all forms of exercise contribute to a generally healthy lifestyle, there are [certain ways](#) in which you can promote immune health through exercising.

- Strength training releases [myokines](#) which are hormone-like messenger substances that have a protective and rejuvenating effect on the immune system
- Mixing cardio and strength training into your workout schedule is optimal for immune health. Strength training can affect the body on a [cellular level](#), encouraging muscles to

repair damaged tissue and continue to grow, while cardio gets your blood pumping and leads to better circulation of antibodies.

- Recovery is just as important as exercise. Muscle fatigue and decreased workout performance can combine to create a dangerous situation both for your bones and muscles as well as create stress on your body that may hamper your immune system.

## How Gyms Can Adapt

Traditionally, gyms have focussed heavily on aesthetics in their training and equipment offerings. This includes heavy weight-lifting stations, lifting machines, and fitness programs designed to lose weight or build muscle definition. But with people now wanting a more immune health-focused approach to fitness, gyms must adapt to this new client demand. Trainers should understand what kinds of exercises clients should engage in to promote immune health. Gyms should also take advantage of smart technology that can guide users through a personal training plan to improve their own immune health. Upgrading technology in your gym can be the best way to retain clients and bring in new customers who are interested in living their healthiest life, rather than looking their best.

## How Our Solutions Can Help

It seems tempting for gym owners to want to advertise workouts for the immune system, without adjusting their offering in a way that truly delivers on this promise. But this might hurt their credibility and brand, once customers do not achieve the desired outcomes. We designed the product ecosystem of EGYM to accommodate the shift to more health-oriented workouts, by delivering real results to members and not just leveraging the same old ideas combined with new marketing promises, such as a better immune defense.

Why? We believe exercise is more than just muscle-building or weight loss. Our smart [machines](#) and programs are designed to promote individual training goals, including a healthy immune system. Each machine guides users automatically through a personalized training plan that will bring them one step closer to their healthiest self with every workout. Each session is designed around this personal goal, with appropriate workout load and duration. This prevents people from overloading while still ensuring an effective training stimulus and the release of myokines.

Our comprehensive suite of machines and apps keep customers motivated throughout their fitness journey both inside and outside the gym. We keep track of progress so clients and trainers can know exactly where to pick up in the next session. Your gym will become a necessary part of a client's workout routine with these machines and training schedules. They will have access to programs that set your gym apart from everyone else, with training programs of high timely relevance.

To learn more about how our products can take your gym to the next level and stand out from competitors, [contact us](#) today. We'd love to help you shift your gym to serve the changing demands of customers. Our multi-faceted approach to fitness can help you have a positive impact on people's physical and immune health.