



JOINING A GYM

Following the holiday season and at the start of a new year, many consumers want to sign a membership with a gym, or health studio as referred to by Florida law.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulates health studios in Florida.



Consider the following questions before signing a membership:

- Is the gym registered with the department? Have any complaints been filed? Search the “Business/Complaint Lookup” at FreshFromFlorida.com or call 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) to check for complaints and how they were resolved.
- Is the gym you’re considering the right fit for you? Don’t join the first time you visit. Use the gym first and make sure it will meet your needs, then take the contract home and read it thoroughly before signing. Be sure to ask for clarification if you don’t understand something.
- Does the gym require a long-term commitment? It’s a good rule of thumb to avoid long contracts. Shop around and ask questions to make sure you know what’s included in the membership.
- Does the gym charge an up-front fee? Service fees, such as registration fees, membership fees, processing or start-up fees, may be required. However, it must be considered a “reasonable and fair service fee,” meaning no more than 10 percent of the contract price.
- What’s the best way to pay? Use a credit card, debit card or check to pay each month. Setting up an automatic withdrawal from your checking account may result in problems if there is ever a dispute.
- Is there a cancellation fee? The contract should include a provision for penalty-free cancellation in writing within three days, exclusive of holidays and weekends, of signing a contract.

Under Florida’s Health Studio Act, health studios are required to register with the department and to provide a bond or other financial security to protect consumers’ funds if the gym closes or moves unexpectedly.

For additional information, to verify a health studio’s registration status or to file a complaint, contact the department at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352), 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) en Espanol or visit FreshFromFlorida.com.



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