

# Is your fitness centre untidy and cluttered?

It's 6pm on a Monday night, peak usage time during the busiest night of the week in the gym. There are gym bags, items of clothing and sweat towels in a pile next to the entrance of the group fitness room.

There are few dumbbells on the dumbbell rack because most of them are on the floor in the middle of the free weights area. You have to step over gym mats to get to equipment. Plates of various sizes are on the floor, propped up against benches or pin-loaded equipment.

And then you see it, happening in what seems like slow motion. A member steps backwards to give himself enough room to do his next exercise

and doesn't see the dumbbell behind him. As he steps on it, his ankle twists sharply and falls heavily to the ground.

The member has ripped a ligament from the bone in his ankle, an injury that now affects him at home, at work and the gym.

## Are you sure this scenario couldn't happen to you?

Having a tidy and uncluttered centre brings important benefits, such as being a more pleasant environment in which to exercise for members and looking more appealing for potential members. However, there are more benefits to a tidy and uncluttered fitness centre than just making it look attractive.

It's reasonable for people to expect to exercise in a safe environment. All fitness centres have a duty of care to look after the health and wellbeing not only of their staff, but their members and others who come into contact with their business, such as visitors.

It's not hard to see why an untidy and cluttered environment can lead to injuries. A person may not see a weight left on the floor, trip over it and sprain a ligament. They could sustain a gash on their leg walking past a weight propped up against a bench. These types of injuries are foreseeable and preventable. They may not be life-threatening, but they are painful, costly, and could mean time away from the gym, as well as work, whilst recovering.



### Tips for reducing the risk injuries

- > Lead by example. Let everyone know that you take safety seriously by stating that you operate a tidy and uncluttered gym in your policies and procedures, and follow through with what you say.
- > Involve your gym staff in developing your policies and procedures and ensure staff know they have an obligation to adhere to them.
- > Start good habits early and inform your members during their induction or initial session that your gym is serious about keeping it tidy and uncluttered, along with an explanation of why.
- > Use signage to reinforce good habits. Pictures and signs can provide reminders about what's expected, and that serious injuries really can happen in the gym environment.
- > Demonstrate commitment by giving members time to put away equipment they've used once they've finished with it during their induction session. If this isn't done and gym staff put away the equipment for members, it reinforces that they don't need to put their equipment away.
- > Arrange your gym layout to allow adequate space and storage for non-fixed equipment such as by using dumbbell racks and exercise ball storage trees.
- > Make sure there is a defined place on the gym floor where each piece of equipment is stored or rests, whether it's fixed (e.g. pin-loaded equipment) or non-fixed (e.g. skipping ropes).
- > Store equipment close to the area you expect it to be used. It's easier for people to put equipment away close to where they used it rather than having to walk over to the other side of the gym to put it away.
- > Actively supervise the gym, monitoring whether members put equipment they've used back to its rightful place, and provide 'friendly reminders' to those members who don't follow the rules.
- > Any staff working on the gym floor, such as personal trainers, need to be reminded of their duty to follow the fitness centre's policies and procedures about putting away equipment after use. Do spot checks. Those not complying can set a bad example for members.

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RHQ197167 Is Your Fitness Centre Untidy 09/2025