

# *HEALTH CLUBS: Canceling that membership*

## **Trap**

Debbie called Consumer Affairs for help in resolving a \$3,000 debt which appeared on her credit report. For the New Year last year, Debbie planned to become a lean, muscle machine at the studio gym 10 minutes from her Lantana home. She visited the studio, toured the facility, and signed papers during her visit. Three days later she changed her mind. Since the salesperson accepted her verbal cancellation, she thought the membership was cancelled. Ten months later this debt appeared on her credit report?

## **Tips**

Here are some important tips to help prevent from finding unwanted charges after cancelling a gym or health studio contract:

- Florida statute prohibits verbal health studio contracts. If asked to sign something, carefully read before signing. If you are offered free use of the facilities or membership extensions at no charge, make sure it is clearly stated in the contract.
- When joining a studio, the contract can be canceled within 3 days of signing (exclusive of legal holidays and weekends). Your written cancellation notice should be sent by certified mail to the address listed on the contract. Keep copies of everything. A verbal cancellation is no cancellation.
- Many gyms charge an initiation or enrollment fee. These fees are usually non-refundable, even if you cancel within 3 days.
- The gym must refund the unused portion of your membership funds within 30 days if you cancel your membership contract for any valid reason allowed under the law.

Health studio contracts are regulated by Florida statute through the Florida Department of Agriculture - Consumer Services. If you have a dispute involving one of the over 150 health studios licensed in Palm Beach County, we may be able to assist with mediating a settlement or we can help link you to the proper state agency

**For more information, call Palm Beach County Consumer Affairs at 561-712-6600 (Boca/Delray residents call 1-888-852-7362 toll free)**