

Living the Fit Life

By **Fit Life** Columnist

Helen M. Ryan

For readers of:



Living the Fit Life

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For readers of:



LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST
THE FIT LIFE

Helen M. Ryan

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LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST THE FIT LIFE

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Helen before

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How To

“*Fitness - if it came in a bottle, everybody would have a great body.*”
~Cher

8 EASY WAYS TO BOOST YOUR METABOLISM



Not much happening in the metabolism department? Need a change to get things going? Here are eight (nearly) painless ways to stoke your metabolic fire.

1) Make a Lifestyle Change

People who physically move a lot or fidget burn on average 350 additional calories per day according to Len Kravitz, M.A., Ph.D., a researcher at the University of New Mexico. So if you pace while talking on the phone, tap your feet, gesture, park farther away, take stairs instead of the elevator, or just simply walk from point A to point B you will increase your total calorie expenditure almost effortlessly. Buy an inexpensive pedometer and measure the distance you cover daily. Your goal: To reach 10,000 steps - each and every day.

2) Eat Breakfast

Your mother may have touted the importance of breakfast and Harvard University agrees with her. Harvard researchers found that participants who ate breakfast were 44 percent less likely to be overweight. One theory suggests that eating in the morning reduces hunger throughout the day, thus curtailing excessive calorie consumption. If you are not a big breakfast eater, try a smoothie, plain yogurt with granola or trail mix on your way out the door.

3) Don't Skip Meals

Calorie restriction can create a "famine effect." Your body responds by thinking it is starving and slows your metabolism, priming your body to store fat. Longer periods of calorie deprivation can inspire your body to begin burning muscle, which in turn lowers your metabolism by as much as 20%, according to Dr. Kravitz. Nutrition experts recommend five smaller meals per day, which provides your body with consistent energy and staves off "hunger binges."

4) Pump Iron

Strength training builds up your lean tissue (muscle). Muscle needs more calories to function than fat. More muscle means more calories burned, even while you are watching television or sleeping. On the flip side, for each pound of muscle you lose you burn fewer calories per day, which eventually results in more...fat.

5) Review Your Antidepressant

Some antidepressants can inhibit your metabolism, while others may raise it slightly. If

continued

8 EASY WAYS TO BOOST YOUR METABOLISM continued

you gain weight on one medication, ask your doctor about switching to a different type that may be more compatible with your body.

6) Add Intervals

When performing aerobic exercise, add intervals to your routine. Intervals burn a large number of calories and challenge your cardiovascular system. Whichever aerobic activity you choose, the goal is to work from “somewhat easy” to “very hard” on the Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale. Each aerobic effort (“hard” to “very hard”) is followed by triple that time for recovery (“somewhat easy”). For example, if you pick up your pace for 20 seconds, you’ll need to recover at least 60 seconds.

Perform intervals only as part of your aerobic program, though, or you miss out on the benefits of steady-state endurance training and run the risk of burning out.

7) Mix In Cardio

Add heart rate-elevating movements to your strength training routine. Between sets, try skips, hops or shuffles. Jump an “air rope.” Perform large muscle movements such as squats with a weighted ball, walking lunges, or jump squats. And anything that requires both your upper and lower body to work simultaneously will elevate your heart rate and burn more calories throughout the session.

8) Eat More Lean Proteins and Healthy Fats

Some studies suggest that proteins and fats are more difficult to digest than simple carbohydrates, thus requiring more calories to process. Proteins and fats also help you feel full longer, so you may eat fewer calories overall.

To keep your bottom line in check do as much as you can, whenever you can. Seek reasons for movement (an impromptu dance break while doing dishes? A walk to the coffee shop?). Find a partner and turn it into a game: which one of you can incur the most steps in a day? Pick another family and start a friendly competition as to who can walk the most number of days to school.

The opportunities are endless.

Ready – set – burn. 

HOMEGROWN MUSCLE: BUILDING A HOME-BASED GYM



If sweating and grunting in a room full of strangers is not for you, do not fret. An effective workout can be had inexpensively in the privacy of your own home or office. All you need are a few basics and some creativity.

Below most items you will find a “Trainer’s Note” with observations, comments and recommendations to get you started.

[Trainer’s note: Where brand names are mentioned there may be other products available that perform the same function. I do not receive endorsements for any of these products. They are items I have first-hand experience with and use with my current clients. Always consult a qualified healthcare professional before beginning any exercise program.]

THE ESSENTIALS

Stability Ball

\$11 and up – major retailers and sporting goods stores

The stability ball is the single most essential piece of exercise equipment for your home gym. Exercising on a ball forces your body to use a variety of muscles just to keep you from falling off. It helps increase strength, improve balance and posture, burn calories, encourage spinal stability, and restore flexibility. Even while working various other body parts on the ball, your core (stomach and back) is usually active and engaged. A strong core is key to preventing, and relieving, low back pain.

Almost any exercise performed with free weights, body weight and/or tubing can be accomplished on a stability ball. From crunches to bicep curls and squats, the stability ball adds a challenging element.

[Trainer’s note: Just sitting on the ball is good for your posture. Try 10 minutes a day of sitting and bouncing on it in front of the television, getting used to the feel.]

Free Weights

Various - major retailers and sporting goods stores

Running the gamut from inexpensive to pricey, free weights come in all shapes, sizes and materials. Expensive barbells, benches and machines are not necessary when you have dumbbells. Dumbbells allow you a wide choice of exercises and ranges of motion. They also permit you to perform more stability-challenging moves (such as incorporating balance elements like single leg, a ball, BOSU®, etc.) to engage your core and other muscles.

[Trainer’s note: Focus on “fighting gravity” when using dumbbells. It’s easy to let gravity pull you too fast. Go slow. Use heavy enough weights for your muscles to become fatigued.]

continued

BUILDING A HOME-BASED GYM continued

RECOMMENDED

Pillow

Various prices

A regular pillow is a great way to add some challenge to your routine. As you become stronger, use a pillow as a “balance pad.” Almost any exercise receives an added boost of intensity by incorporating this simple, inexpensive household item. Stand on it, sit on it, even lay on it, while you work out.



BOSU® Balance Trainer

From \$99 - major retailers and sporting goods stores or www.BOSU.com

BOSU stands for *Both Sides Up* and is that funny-looking blue bubble dome you might have heard of. A BOSU is like an exercise ball cut in half, with a hard plastic platform on the bottom. The exercise varieties are endless: Jump on it, hop over it, rotate, squat, push up, crunch and press. Endurance, strength, stability, flexibility and balance are all gained on the BOSU. The simplest moves (like a crunch, the “dead bug” or just standing on it) will suddenly become a challenge. Your core activates and your legs engage. More steady than a ball, you can even add challenging abdominal exercises like the V-sit. Your kids will love it, too.

[Trainer’s note: Spend some time playing with the BOSU. Find a partner and play “partner games,” too. It’s so much fun you won’t really realize how hard you are working.]

Kettlebells

From \$29.95 – major retailers and sporting goods stores

Mariska Hargitay credits them with helping her regain her body after pregnancy. Jason Statham used them to get lean and ripped. Other stars like Jessica Biel, Jennifer Lopez, and Matthew McConaughey have all used them. So what are kettlebells? Solid cast iron bowling ball-shaped weights with handles....the hottest trend in full body workouts.

Kettlebells are centuries old, but kettlebell training as we know it today stems from Russia. They provide a thorough, whole-body workout that incorporates strength, endurance and flexibility. The kettlebells’ off-centered weight forces you to use more stabilizer muscles with each move, thus involving many muscles simultaneously. Your core stays active and your body’s muscles learn to work smoothly as one unit.

Sarah Lurie, the nation’s premier kettlebell expert, has partnered with GoFit to provide “The Iron Core Powered by GoFit” kettlebell system for home use. The kettlebells, along with an instructional DVD, are now available at leading retailers and sporting goods stores. Lurie recently released “Mommy Moves,” a pre- and post-natal

continued

BUILDING A HOME-BASED GYM continued

kettlebell workout designed to strengthen core muscles and build endurance.

[Trainer's note: My butt was sore for two days afterwards. That's a positive for a woman over 40!]

The Perfect Pushup

From \$39.95 - major retailers or www.perfectpushup.com

The Perfect Pushup allows you to perform push ups that are easier on your joints yet more challenging on your muscles. The rotation handles are designed to let your arms rotate naturally, for a deeper, fuller push up.

[Trainer's note: I can do less than half of my normal number of push ups while using this. After my first time, the following day I felt muscles in my back that I had never felt before.]

EXTRAS

TRX® Suspension Trainer®

From \$149.95 – www.fitnessanywhere.com

If you are fairly strong, have good form and want one piece of equipment that “does it all,” TRX straps fit the bill. With the TRX Suspension Training System your body weight is your equipment. Completely portable, the suspension system mounts in doorways, on trees or any overhead bar. The bright yellow straps work your core with virtually every move, and increases

strength, stamina, balance and coordination. It provides unlimited versatility and easily progresses you from one exercise to another.

[Trainer's note: While Fitness Anywhere recommends it for all levels, as a trainer who has worked with and absolutely loves the system, I would recommend it only for intermediate to advanced exercisers. Beginners should receive professional instruction before starting.] ↻

ADD-ONS

Gliding Disks (or paper plates)
www.glidingdisks.com

Exercise tubing
Major retailers or www.spriproducts.com

Full foam roller (6" x 24"-36")
Target or www.performbetter.com

Medicine ball (weighted ball)
Various weights, major retailers and sporting goods stores.

FITNESS AFTER 40

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY WAIST?

You exercise sporadically. You eat about the same as you always have. Then one day you can't button your pants. What gives?



Hormonal changes and loss of lean body mass (muscle) contribute to this waist creep the expansion of our waistlines we tend to experience as we approach, and pass, our 40s.

On average, women lose five pounds of muscle per decade after 18 years of age. If we continue to eat as we did when we were younger, the issue of calories in versus calories out comes strongly into play. But keeping the creep at bay is easier than you think.

Blast the Fat

We know it. We've heard it. We've read it. But we are so busy with our careers, our lives and our families that we don't want to admit it. There is no "magic pill" for losing weight and staying, or getting, into good physical shape. The bottom line is we have to eat healthy...and sweat more.

Food: Simply put, we need to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables; consume whole grains and high-fiber foods; limit saturated and trans fats; cut down on sugars and simple carbohydrates; and limit alcohol. Controlling portion sizes is key,

too. Don't deprive yourself of what you want. Eat healthy - most of the time. And indulge - a little. It's all about balance.

Exercise: 30 minutes most days of the week is recommended for general health. But to keep our lean mass up and our body fat percentage down we need to add just a little more effort.

Fidget

According to researchers at the University of New Mexico, people who fidget burn an additional 352 calories per day than people who do not fidget.

Those extra 352 calories can add up to a yearly net loss of about 36 pounds! So fidget, take the stairs, park farther away, pace while talking on the phone, walk to a colleague's desk, conduct meetings standing up or walking around, dance, exercise while watching TV, make housework brisk, walk the kids to school, garden - be as "inefficient" as possible, making as many trips and taking as many steps as you can.

continued

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY WAIST? continued

Structured exercise

A) BREAK IT UP

Rise 20 minutes earlier to fit in some strength training and core work. Then break up your “30-minutes-most-days-of-the-week” cardio into 10- or 15-minute increments throughout the day, or however it fits into your life. Your goal is to reach 200-300 minutes of cardiovascular exercise per week. Write down how much you exercised each day in a cheap calendar, then total the week. Keep adding to it until you’ve reached your 300 minutes and exercise has become a way of life.

B) GET THE COMBO

Use large muscle groups. Combine movements. Pushups work wonders for the upper body. Or try a stability ball “wall squat” with bicep curl. Use as many muscles as possible within each exercise. Now’s the time to be creative.

C) CRANK THE INTENSITY

Less time means higher intensity. Work each muscle until fatigue with a weight you can lift at least eight times but no more than 15. Experiment with a circuit. Add intervals to some of your cardio.

D) BURST FORTH

Between exercises, add a jump, a jack or a shuffle. Not only does this raise your heart rate and increase total calorie burn, but it also adds bone-protecting impact to your workouts.

E) SWITCH IT

Our bodies need variety to see results, and as we grow older we are more susceptible to overuse injuries. So protect your joints and muscles, and challenge your body, by shaking things up.

Your body is an amazing machine. Take care of it and it will take care of you.

Inspiration

“*The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking places.*”
~Author Unknown

Personal Essay

My "A-HA" Moment

Air under my feet. Levitating. Higher. Higher still. Faster. Sweat pouring. The sound of my own raspy breath filling my ears. Heart pounding, thighs screaming. Tears welling up in my eyes, easily mistaken for sweat. Not tears of pain. Or agony. Or defeat. But joy. Joy tinged with sadness.

That was my "a-ha moment." The moment I realized who I had become – who I had changed myself back into – how hard I had worked – and what I had lost in the process. I was now someone strong and capable, physically and mentally fit. I was there, in the moment, with 200 other fitness professionals, sweating, breathing and moving. I had fought for this. Hard. Gained a lot and lost even more. But I had triumphed. I was there and I was doing it. All my hard work and all that I lost, both physically and personally, wrapped up into the one moment. I sweated. And then I cried.

Many of us have an "a-ha moment." Mine was at a fitness instructor convention in an athletic skills and drills workshop. Not much of a place for a revelation. There were no lights from heavens above – no angels singing. Just a single blue BOSU half stability ball, propulsion....and me.

In August of 2003 I weighed **198 pounds**. I wore a size 20. I could not walk very far, I could not climb stairs. My feet hurt all the time. I had spent years staring into the bottoms of empty ice cream containers, spoon in hand, wondering what had happened to me and my life. Where did I go? Who was this unhappy creature eating away her days, passing time, waiting until she died? I had no answers. The young, fit, happy, passionate, hopeful 20-year-old I once knew was gone. She had been replaced by a sad, fat, dispirited, hopeless 37-year-old – one who could not even reach her feet to tie her shoelaces.

When I made my decision to give myself one last chance, to make one final effort after thousands of failures, it was the beginning of a new life – but also the end of an old. My resolution to better my health, reduce my cholesterol, strengthen my "bad valve"-plagued heart, and reduce the excess weight that caused me so much physical pain ended up costing me my marriage and much of my life.

"I had spent years staring into the bottoms of empty ice cream containers, spoon in hand, wondering what had happened to me and my life."



School event in '02



After 62 mile bike ride in '06

continued

Personal Essay

My "A-HA" Moment continued

Losing weight for me was never about looking better or being attractive to the opposite sex. I couldn't care less – I still don't. I wanted to feel my body move again, to feel alive again. Wanted to have less pain, to not have people look at me in pity. "Poor

fat girl. No self-control." I used to be strong. I used to be healthy. I needed to feel that again. To show my children exercise is good, and that our bodies are meant

to move. That it feels great to work and stretch your muscles and that it builds you from the inside, providing mental strength and fortitude, purpose and passion.

I fought hard to get healthy. I would get up early before my kids rose and strength train. I would walk them to school. I tried to squeeze exercise in without compromising too much time with my family. I gave up television completely and sacrificed any other recreational activities so I could participate in Spinning classes (indoor cycling). But fighting hard for my health became the problem, because I had started fighting for something. Myself. Finally standing up for me, becoming who I used to be. And standing up for me meant developing a backbone, which was the beginning of the end of my marriage.

By "finding myself" I lost the life I was used to. But I also gained purpose and meaning: helping others, by becoming a personal trainer and Spinning instructor. Helping them get healthier and stronger, lowering their cholesterol and strengthening their hearts through exercise.

a reader says:

"I felt like I was right there with you in the class of 200 people! Your new passion for health, and wanting to help others is infectious. After reading about your 'A Ha' moment, I long to find my 'moment.' After reading this, I feel I am closer to achieving this." ~Deborah

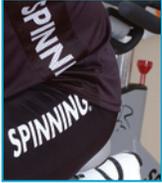
Making them laugh and getting them motivated to work out and stick with it. I could finally contribute something to the world and give positive energy back instead of draining it, as I had before.

My "a-ha moment" was bittersweet. I had made huge physical and mental gains. I was healthy again and I could keep up with a room full of other fitness professionals, feeling my body working and moving, joints smooth and bones strong. I could sense all that I had sacrificed to get there, and all that I had lost, from my weight to my marriage.

But for one moment, that magical moment, I was the "original" me, free of problems. I was in a convention hall - yes - but soaring, body and soul. Free to be me. To feel my body move. Just for minute, be that 20-year-old again. *And flying.* ✨

Personal Essay

How Spinning® Saved My Life



Everything I know about life I learned in Spinning class.

It's true. The stationary bike has been my teacher, and I have spent hundreds of hours learning from it.

Four years ago when I saw my first Spinner bike it seemed like...just a bike. Made of cold metal with an unwelcoming seat, it did not look very comfortable. I felt physically awkward: I was very overweight and out of shape in a room full of really fit people. I wanted to leave, to run as fast and far as I could, but did not want not want to be seen as chickening out.

The first half hour was hell. My behind was numb, my legs were shaky and my heart was pounding. But then I felt something inside. A little spark that ignited a part of me...a part I thought was long gone. That spark re-ignited my pilot light and eventually changed - and saved - my life.

Lessons learned from the bike:

1) It's OK to be alone. When you're in class you are with a group of people but also alone. You close your eyes and just feel your body moving.

You learn that it is OK to be by yourself. No one but you is going to get you up that hill. No one but you is going to keep you pedaling towards the finish line. You suddenly realize that you are

a capable person and that you like being with yourself.

2) Accept what you are faced with. A Spinning class is a lot like life: You never know what you are going to get. There are ups, downs and flats. As you round a corner, you find a monster hill waiting for you on the other side. You could stop. You could gear down. You could just go home. But you don't. Because as in life, when an obstacle presents itself you find a way to get over it. And when you do you feel great. Each obstacle and each climb makes you stronger and ready for more.

3) Never give up. Your ride hour after hour, mile after mile. Some days you stay in the saddle riding at an easy pace, chipping away at the miles, just as with work and home life. Other days you hit a fast flat, racing along, trying to hold your pace until the finish line. Your legs are burning, your heart is pumping and still you keep going because you know you can make it. You learn mind over matter.

4) Be in the moment. With so much to do each day you rush around frantically, always planning your next move, next errand or next day. In Spinning class you learn to be "in the moment." If your mind starts wandering you will not be able to

continued

How Spinning® Saved My Life continued

keep up or hold the pace. So you stay focused on how your body feels, what it is doing and how it is moving. You have to consistently breathe and relax, feeling your thighs moving smoothly and rhythmically. You learn physical awareness, which keeps you in the present and enjoying the moment.

5) You can survive most anything. With each class that passes you gain more and more strength. You learn that burning thighs won't kill you and that you can keep your heart rate elevated for much longer than you thought. You discover that you are far more capable than you ever imagined and that a strong will can overcome tired thighs. From this you realize that you will almost always make it through.

6) Ditch the comfort zone. Sometimes it's fine to be in your comfort zone. It's easy and familiar. But you soon learn you will never really improve if you don't break free and place some positive stress on your body and mind. Whether you are riding an uncomfortable interval or considering a career change, going outside your normal boundaries will only lead to growth and improvement....which in turn makes you better.

7) Love your body. Sometimes we all feel physically inadequate. Our bottoms are too droopy, breasts too small, biceps not large enough. What you learn in Spinning class is to love how your body works and how it feels when it is functioning at peak performance. Your thighs

might be larger than you would like, but they are strong and functional and can climb anything you put in front of them. Your chest might be less than impressive, but it holds a heart that can skate through an 85% effort and lungs that can feed your body with precious oxygen. You learn to love what you are and ignore what you are not. It's your body – it's healthy – it works – and it's strong. Be in it...and love it.

When I look at my life today I realize how much the bike has taught me. I apply all of the above each and every day. I am comfortable being alone. I have incredible stamina, fortitude and persistence. I am not afraid of what lies ahead – I take it as it comes and handle it one challenge at a time. When I play with my children I am with them, not in my own head planning the next day.

a reader says:

“Spinning has changed my life as well...not only do I look forward to each ride, I am proud of what I can accomplish and I know I try new things and actually be successful.” ~Freya

I realize that I am mentally stronger than I think and I can jump over almost any hurdle life places in front of me. Mentally, as well as physically, I push the limits, constantly learning new things, expanding my horizons and challenging myself. And my thighs that can probably leg press a mini-van. These same thighs have carried me through

continued

How Spinning® Saved My Life continued

many a Spinning class, up real mountains, and 100 mile rides on my road bike.

Now, with my new life, I chase endorphins instead of food. I know that happiness comes from within and that overcoming challenges is what makes us strong and balanced. I've also learned that almost nothing is impossible.

For 15 years I did not exercise. I was obese with high cholesterol, mired in unhappiness and

depression. I did not like the direction my life was taking, but felt powerless to change it. I had given up on myself and had thrown my dreams out the window. But when I started Spinning I began to feel a change in my mind as well as my body. With each class I mastered more and more and became increasingly confident. The hours logged on that bike taught me some valuable lessons... not so much about fitness or health but about myself. *And life.* ✨

Tips for New Riders from Spinning.com

Getting Ready to Ride

Adjust the seat height so that your knees are slightly bent at the bottom of the pedal stroke.

Adjust fore/aft seat position so that your arms are a comfortable distance from the handlebars and your elbows are slightly bent.

If you're a beginner, start with the handlebars in a relatively high position. As your flexibility increases and you become more comfortable on the bike you can begin to move the handlebars downward until they are approximately level with the saddle. Always make sure that the handlebars, seat post and seat slider are securely attached and that all pop pins are completely engaged.

During Class

Place the ball of your foot over the center of the pedal. Make sure that your shoelaces are tucked in and your feet are securely attached to the pedals.

Note that because Spinner bikes have a fixed gear, you must gradually reduce the speed of your pedal

strokes to stop the pedals from moving. To stop immediately, pull up on the resistance knob while keeping your legs clear of the moving pedals.

Remember there is no competition in the Spinning program. Go at the pace that feels right for you.

There should always be some resistance on the bike. Familiarize yourself with all movements at a moderate pace before you attempt to increase your speed.

Stay in control. Focus on your form and on making smooth transitions between movements.

A heart rate monitor is an unmatched tool for helping you make the most of each workout. Learn more [Adobe PDF] about the benefits of training with a heart rate monitor or visit the Spinning store to browse our selection of heart rate monitors.

If you begin to feel faint or dizzy, slowly stop pedaling, carefully dismount from the bike and inform your instructor immediately.

Visit www.spinning.com for a Spinning facility near you.

Personal Essay

*A Woman Says,
"I Love My Thighs!"*



the author riding 60 miles

Yes, that's correct. You actually heard a woman say that she loves her thighs.

My thighs are not particularly attractive: They are neither long nor thin nor tan. In fact, they are kind of short, bulky and pale. So why do I love them?

Through literally thick and thin, my legs have done their job. They have climbed to the top of the Acropolis in Greece; splashed in the fjords of Norway; walked on the beaches of Thailand. They have taken me 100 miles by bicycle from Irvine to San Diego, run a 5k in Temecula, and ridden up Mt. Palomar. These very same legs have rocked babies to sleep, walked children to school and held kids up in the air in a game of "airplane." As a personal trainer, they have shown clients how good it feels to move, and as a Spinning instructor they have led full classes on endorphin-elevating adventures.

My thighs have seen a lot. They have been very overweight, where at times they would blister on the insides from rubbing together. They have been very thin, where light could actually be seen in between them. Now they are in the middle. Neither thin nor fat, but rather sturdy and muscular.

I never feel as great as when I'm wearing bike shorts, mounting a bicycle, feet secured in familiar clipless pedals, thighs ready for action. I'm sure I

don't actually look as fabulous as I feel in those bike shorts, but I don't really care – I am strong, capable, and very happy.

Sometimes I wish I had long, lean legs - sure. The kind of legs that turn mens' heads. But then I remember that turning mens' heads does not make me feel empowered, that wearing a miniskirt well does not release endorphins, and that no amount of tanning will get me up the side of a mountain on a bicycle.

My thighs have given me freedom. They have taken me interesting places and more adventures lie ahead. There are many foreign beaches to comb and ancient ruins to scale.

So even if I cannot turn mens' heads by the length and beauty of my legs, maybe I can turn their heads by leg pressing their trucks. After all, that would be memorable. And creating memories are what my legs do.

I love my thighs. ↪

Seasonal

“*We're fools whether we dance or not, so we might as well dance.*”
~Japanese Proverb

AQUATIC EXERCISE: GETTING FIT IN THE POOL



When temperatures start soaring, exercise may be the last thing on your mind. That hot, sticky feeling is often a great workout de-motivator...

...however, we have an opportunity to turn this de-motivator into a motivator: exercising in the pool. Using water as a way to get in shape is both effective and fun. No longer associated only with seniors, aquatic fitness allows us work our bodies hard, yet stay cool and comfortable.

Athletes, housewives, rehabilitation patients and even children are catching this next wave in fitness, and a wide variety of workout options are now available. According to the Aquatic Exercise Association, a not-for-profit educational organization, popular exercise formats that have been developed and adapted for use in the pool include:

- Kickboxing
- Pilates and yoga
- Sports-specific training
- Plyometrics
- Deep water running
- Targeted core training
- Bootcamps

Benefits of Exercising in Water

1. Burns Calories

A properly structured water training session can burn up to 500 calories, which facilitates weight loss.

2. Provides Full Body Conditioning

When you move through water you are always encountering resistance, which challenges your muscles. Water provides a well-balanced workout that encompasses the major components of physical fitness: endurance, muscular strength and flexibility....all in one shot.

3. Saves Time

In the pool your exercise sessions involve working muscles in pairs, so you accomplish more in less time.

4. Is Easy on the Joints

Water makes your body buoyant and the impact to the joints during exercise is significantly less than on land. Not only is this good for seniors, but athletes needing cross-training, rehabilitation patients and pregnant women benefit from the lessened joint stress.

continued

GETTING FIT IN THE POOL continued

5. **Alleviates Back Pain and Strengthens Core**

Water provides a low- to no-impact environment that reduces stress on the spine, which sometimes allows you to work harder than on land. Deep water exercise is also a very effective stomach strengthener, which is important for back health and good posture.

6. **Provides Cross-Training**

Repetitive motion often leads to injuries, so moving your program into the pool or changing up your exercise completely gives your body a well-deserved break. Runners, for example, often find deep water jogging a welcome, yet challenging, alternative to the constant pounding on pavement.

7. **Keeps You Cool**

Though you do sweat during pool exercise sessions, the water helps wash the sweat away so you don't feel uncomfortable. Overheating is a frequent danger with hot weather workouts and is much less likely in the pool.

8. **Relaxes You**

The fluid movement of water relaxes you and facilitates better sleep. New mind-body classes such as pool yoga and pilates also reinforce relaxation. Specialized treatments such as Watsu, a gentle form of body therapy performed in warm water combining elements of massage, stretching and shiatsu, offers a complete calming experience. And when in doubt – merely float. The gentle motion of the water will cradle you and let your muscles release.

As with all exercise, consistency is key. Do your research and find a water-based program that appeals to your personality and needs. That way, come fall, you won't be struggling to fit back into your skinny jeans.

Stay cool. 

For more information on exercising in the water, The Aquatic Exercise Association is a not-for-profit educational organization committed to the advancement of aquatic fitness worldwide.

<http://www.aeawave.com/>

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS – SIMPLE WAYS TO KEEP THE POUNDS FROM PILING

When the Holidays arrive with enticement everywhere, what do you do? Give in and pay the price in January? Or sacrifice now and start the new year without a brand-new muffin top? To make it easier on you, here's a guide to enjoying yourself sensibly.



The holidays are here, once again. Endless days of parties, pastries, shopping and stress. Everywhere you look and everywhere you go temptation abounds. Clients bring edible gifts, friends deliver baked goods. The office holiday party overflows with food and drink.

With enticement everywhere, what do you do? Give in and pay the price in January? Or sacrifice now and start the new year without a brand-new muffin top? To make it easier on you, here's a guide to enjoying yourself sensibly.

1. Stay in Motion

Exercise whenever you can squeeze it in. Staying active will keep your metabolism revved up. Exercise also reduces your stress level and clears your mind, a welcome bonus. So park far away from the mall entrance; carry your own bags; clean vigorously; rise 20 minutes earlier and hop on the treadmill; perform as many squats, lunges and pushups as you can muster. Jump on a trampoline or participate in half of your regular exercise class. It doesn't matter what it is - just keep moving.

2. Eat, Eat, Eat

Before you do anything else – eat. Eat prior to every shopping trip, party and gathering. When you are starving you are apt to eat anything that is not nailed down. You will ingest too much, too quickly and make bad choices. So eat frequently and healthily. Before a party, have some low fat vegetable soup or steamed veggies. Try healthy fiber-filled foods to take the edge off your hunger.

3. Wear It Tight

Wearing something that's snug around your waist reminds you to keep focused on your goal, which is to not overindulge. If you are comfortable and have room at the waistline it is easier to overeat.

4. Survey the Scene

When at a party or gathering, spend a few moments surveying your food choices. Pick out a couple of items you really can't miss (the brownies? Grandma's special casserole?). Then, using the smallest plate you can find, select salads (go easy on the dressing), veggies and lean proteins (chicken breast, shrimp, skinless turkey or beans). When you have filled up on healthy

continued

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS continued

goods then proceed to your favorites. Take a small serving of each and enjoy.

5. Shut the Voice Out

Don't listen to the crackers and nuts. They will call your name. They will entice you to eat more of them than you should. One visit to each is fine; but handful after handful is easy to do without thinking, and the calories add up quickly.

6. Eat Slowly

Take your time. Enjoy. Talk a lot. Sip water in between bites. Give your stomach a chance to tell you when it's full.

7. Don't Linger

Put some distance between yourself and the food. When you are done, you are done. Move on.

8. Brush Your Teeth

If you can, bring a toothbrush. After dessert brush your teeth. You will be less likely to keep eating if you can't taste the food you just ate.

Have a good season but party with restraint. Even if you gain only a couple of pounds, remember - few people actually lose that holiday weight. Eat what you really like, skip what you really don't care for. Move your body more. Focus on being with your family and friends and sharing moments rather than focusing on the food. ↻

RESOURCES

Spinning
www.spinning.com

American Council on Exercise
www.acefitness.com

IDEA Fitness Association
www.ideafit.com

Aquatic Fitness Association
<http://www.aeawave.com>

Harvard Health Publications
<http://www.health.harvard.edu/>

Coming soon: The Real World Guide to Weight Loss. Visit www.RealWorldWeightLoss.com for more information or to sign up for a **free** weight loss and fitness newsletter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Helen M. Ryan is a certified personal trainer, a Spinning® instructor, and a health writer. In 2003 Helen weighed in at her highest weight ever: 198 lbs. at 5' 1". The following is Helen's story of how she changed her life and "re-ignited her pilot light."



I know something that many other personal trainers do not. I didn't learn it in school; I didn't learn it at a workshop. It helps me be a better trainer, a passionate instructor, and a more understanding person.

My "something" is both simple and powerful: I know what it feels like to be fat, out of shape, and unable to tie my shoes.

As a teenager and young adult I was not fat. Yes, I did have some "heavier" times, depending on my stress level. I exercised a lot: biked to school/work, exercised at the gym, walked everywhere. So my taking comfort in food didn't show – I worked off whatever I ate. At 19 I also began teaching group exercise classes, which I did for many years. But despite my teaching, the excess calories began to show. I was 5'1" and 164 pounds by the time I was 26 years old.

Every day I would wait for "tomorrow" to start my diet. I had started and failed hundreds, if not thousands, of times. And every tomorrow would become another tomorrow. And another. So the weight kept piling on. I stopped exercising. By the time my father became terminally ill with cancer in April of 2003 I weighed 184 pounds. The next four months, as I cared for him, food kept me going and made me feel comforted. When my father

passed away that August I was 198 pounds, my highest weight ever.

Many people have a "life-changing" experience. Mine was holding my father's hand while he died – and facing my own mortality. It made me think of all the things I'd never done while waiting for another "tomorrow." Waiting for the day when I'd miraculously wake up thin and fit.

I started small. I never dreamed I would end up losing the weight I did. I began walking. Then lifting some weights. Then using my elliptical machine. I changed my eating habits by adding some fruits, vegetables and whole grains to my pitiful diet. I scoured every health and fitness resource I could find. Nearly a year and 82 pounds later, I was 116 pounds and a size 4.

I'm not going to lie. It was hard. Very hard. I made a lot of difficult choices: I had to say "no" to food a lot. I had to say "yes" to exercise a lot (even when I didn't feel like it). I had to learn to put my health first and make tomorrow happen today. The payoff is I have much more energy. I can bike 50 miles, then dance all night. I look and feel younger and happier. You can do it, too...by not waiting for tomorrow. ✨