

FIGHTING FIT

Lost your fitness mojo? Looking for inspiration? Sports physiotherapist **Scott Tindal** gives his expert opinion on a few of our favourites – from the newest trends to the tried and tested

AERIAL YOGA

We've had Bikram and Ashtanga yoga, but the one we want to try is aerial yoga. It looks like a lot of fun. The workout involves traditional yoga postures, but rather than do them on a mat, you are suspended from the ceiling in a big sling (but not so high that you need a safety net). The slings support your weight, increase freedom of movement and help to achieve deep stretches. aerialyogalondon.co.uk

Scott says: Any yoga is fantastic if it's done properly. The instructors have to be certified, and if you have any issues – trouble with your back for instance – they need to know and tailor the programme to suit you. A lot of people spend the day slumped in front of their computers – the human body wasn't designed for that. So, getting out of a seated posture and making the body take up new positions is definitely a good thing.

BORROW MY DOG

As anyone who owns a dog will tell you, those soulful eyes are a great motivator to go for walkies, whatever the weather. But what if you don't have a pooch to hand? Don't worry, BorrowMyDoggy matches dog owners with dog 'borrowers' who are keen to

have regular access to a four-legged friend. borrowmydoggy.com

Scott says: I love this. It's a great way to get people walking more. The only walking a lot of people do is from their bed to the shower to the car, then to the office and back again. Getting the body moving is really important. The average number of steps people should be taking is around 10,000 per day. I often encourage patients to buy a pedometer to monitor how many they actually take.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

By the time you read this, the heavy snow we've been promised this winter may have arrived, so why not make the most of it? OK, so you need the proper equipment for this one. But cross-country skiing can be done at a range of levels and involves propelling yourself across snowy terrain, rather than just whizzing down a mountain. And it may even work to keep you warm! snowsportengland.org.uk/start-skiing-cross-country

Scott says: Cross-country skiing is a great cardiovascular exercise. There's also less pressure on your hips, knees and ankles than in downhill skiing, so if you have an injury or

any concerns about those areas, it could be a good alternative.

HULA HOOPING

The celebrity world is a big fan of this waist-toning trick, with endorsements coming in from the likes of Kelly Osbourne, Michelle Obama and Grace Jones. Just swing a hula hoop round your waist and work to keep it from falling on the ground – simple, once you get the hang of it. To take it up a notch, use smaller hoops. Just try not to break anything if you give it a go at home. ecofitness.co.uk/hulabeat

Scott says: This sounds great. Being healthy doesn't always have to be about serious exercising. If you can burn off 200 calories in 30 minutes and have fun doing it, then I think it's a great innovation. It's very low impact, and it's always beneficial to get the hips and back moving, but if you have issues with your back you should start off slowly. And of course, releasing serotonin while you're having a laugh doing it is an added bonus!

RUNNING

Whether on a treadmill or around a park, running really is up there with walking as

a contender for the title of 'most accessible exercise'. Regular running improves your circulation, which is good news for your heart, burns off calories and releases those all-important endorphins. All you need is a good pair of shoes and somewhere to run. therunningbug.co.uk

Scott says: Running is really beneficial if done well. But there are some important factors to bear in mind to reduce the impact on your knees and hips. The first is to run using a 'forefoot strike' – landing on the front of your foot, rather than your heel. Many people run on a 'heel strike'. It's also important to have a 'high cadence' – this relates to how many steps per minute you take (the ideal number is 180). Lastly, a shortened stride length is also important. If you are unsure about your technique, a physiotherapist can work on a programme with you. Be patient – if you are changing your running technique then you need to start off with a reduced distance and duration. The increased load on the Achilles and calf muscles is quite significant and you do not want to overuse injuries here.

CROSSFIT

A serious workout for those who want a real challenge, CrossFit is defined as 'constantly

varied, functional movements performed at relatively high intensity and scalable to all levels'. In layman's terms, there are three aspects: gymnastics (chin-ups, push-ups, muscle-ups, handstands); Olympic lifting ('snatches', 'powercleans' and 'deadlifts' for those who know their lifts); cardiovascular fitness in the form of rowing, running and swimming. You can work out at a CrossFit gym, or on your own via apps like iWod Pro. crossfitlondonuk.com

Scott says: You'd be forgiven for thinking CrossFit is just flavour of the month, but it involves traditional exercises that have been around for many years. It's also challenging. There are different levels that you need to work through, but it is possible for anyone to do it. The main thing you need for CrossFit is good form, to ensure you don't injure yourself. So it's very important to learn the moves. For women who worry that they will 'bulk up' through weightlifting, this is a myth – women don't produce enough testosterone naturally to become bulky. Rather, they should find that overall they will lose fat and increase lean muscle mass. There is a strong CrossFit community, and it is a very motivating environment. Oh yes, another word of caution: it can be very addictive.



Scott Tindal is clinical director at Kensington Physio & Sports Medicine, London. Having worked with the GB rowing team, Tonga Rugby Union and the Leicester Tigers Rugby Club, he has extensive experience treating both recreational and professional athletes.



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