

## **Are You Fit for Exercise?**

Did you watch the Commonwealth Games from Glasgow and get the exercise buzz? If they can do that much perhaps we should do just a bit – stop and think. If you're tempted to dash off and join the nearest exercise class - don't before you've looked at all the options.

Sensible exercise is good for your health and improves your shape. But the wrong teacher and the wrong exercise can cause serious problems. Don't get sucked in to the latest fad just because it's fashionable. Untrained teachers are bad enough in aerobics classes but step and slide aerobics are even worse. Throughout the country osteopaths are seeing more and more injuries from this type of ridiculous exercise. We have seen back pain and disc problems caused by the exaggerated movements in aerobics; ankle, knee, calf and hip injuries from step classes; ankle, knee and thigh trauma from the ultimate stupidity of slide aerobics – a bit like speed skating without the skates and described as a high-intensity, low-impact workout in 60 minutes!

If you're going to any exercise class make sure the teacher is trained and preferably a member of a recognised professional body. If no-one asks you anything about your previous medical history and makes you fill in a medical questionnaire, go somewhere else. Watch a class before you join to make sure there is adequate supervision - one teacher for a class of 20 or 30 pupils is not enough.

Real fitness is a combination of strength, stamina and mobility - it's not much good being able to run a marathon if you can't carry your shopping home from the supermarket or being a super bodybuilding weight lifter if you can't take your sweater off over your head. You need to get fit to exercise, so if you're overweight, start with non-weight bearing exercise, like swimming or cycling, or get into the habit of regular walking. If you haven't exercised for years, don't start where you left off. Twenty years as a couch potato is not good preparation for a sudden game of squash with the new office junior - but it is a pretty good prescription for a heart attack.

Aim for three sessions of physical activity a week, and make sure that you also exert yourself enough to get out of breath at least once a day. If you get a pain in your chest or feel dizzy, STOP. If it happens more than once, see your doctor. Never exercise if you've got a cold, flu or feel unwell.

Getting into the habit of regular exercise reduces your risk of heart disease, helps to control blood pressure and is vital to any healthy weight reduction plan. It improves your sleep and is known to help reduce menstrual pain and problems. Regular exercise means better general

health and fewer days off work. Relief from depression and an improved sex life are additional bonuses.

But take care. You need to speak to your doctor before starting any strenuous exercise programme if you are over 40 and habitually inactive, if you suffer from any form of bone or joint disease, if you've got high blood pressure or heart problems, if you get chest pain or dizzy spells, or regularly feel faint.

If none of these apply to you, start now. But remember that it doesn't have to be hell to be healthy - going for the burn is out, being desperately competitive is unnecessary. Choose activities you enjoy and make them part of your regular routine. You'll be amazed at how quickly you start to feel and look better. And perhaps most surprisingly of all, even problems like chronic fatigue and tired all the time syndrome will improve.

To help any aches and pains when you start being more active, try the herbal medicine, FlexiHerb – see [www.flexiherb.co.uk](http://www.flexiherb.co.uk)

FlexiHerb is a traditional herbal medicinal product used for the relief of backache, rheumatic or muscular pain and general aches and pains in the muscles and joints, based on traditional use only. Taking one to two tablets twice daily can be used help to relieve general aches and pains. If symptoms worsen or there is no improvement seen after taking Flexiherb for eight weeks, a doctor should be consulted.

Each pharmaceutical grade coated tablet is foiled blister packed to retain its freshness and maintain its potency.

FlexiHerb contains Devil's Claw, a perennial shrub that grows in the desert countries of Southern Africa, most notably in the Kalahari sands of Namibia. After heavy rain it develops luscious leaves and beautiful red-violet, trumpet-shaped flowers. The name originates from the hooked, claw-like seed pods attached to the flowers.

