

SPROUT



The popularity of these New Age exercises is, of course, powered by attitudinal change. Till sometime back, exercising was only for people who either wanted to lose that flab around their waist or for young men who wanted to pump it up to look like the present California Governor. Not anymore. The benefit of a healthy body, and the dangers of an unhealthy one, everyone understands. Indians have more visceral fat, putting us at a greater risk of heart diseases. Add to this the sharp increase in lifestyle-related diseases. Says Dinaz Vervatwala, owner of Dinaz's, a fitness studio in Hyderabad: "In the mechanical age that we live in, there is very little physical activity. Sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy eating habits and irregular sleep patterns lead to an increase in the body's stress levels."

That's why you find people queuing up for Power Yoga. Stott Pilates, Tai Chi and Boot Camp. Take a walk, you say? Wait. Power Yoga is a series of yoga poses which you do without stopping and is accompanied by Vinyasa or riding the breath in order to flow from one pose to another. Power Yoga sessions are done in a heated room and are rigorous cardio-vascular exercise. It physically and mentally challenges you "in order to help you connect to your inner power".

Stott Pilate is a safe and highly effective way to stretch, strengthen and streamline the body with stressing the joints. It is performed on specialised equipment with emphasis on breath, core conditioning and body awareness. Boot Camp challenges you to take your body to its limits. The workouts involve calisthenics like push-ups, jumping jacks, crunches and other body weight exercises the difference lies in the intensity. They work your entire body heart and muscles by going from one exercise to another with no rest. You work, you sweat and, best of all you burn calories like you are on fire.

If that sounds too heavy-duty, try Spinning, an exercise regime that utilizes a specially designed bicycle. The spinning bike is designed to mimic an outdoor bicycle ride. The intensity of your workout can be adjusted by manipulating the resistance knob, which is located on each spinning bicycle. Too sedate? Go for Tai Chi or kickboxing. The Chinese form of Tai Chi uses meditation and deep breathing as they move through a series of continuous exercises, called "forms," which resemble a slow-moving ballet. It integrates mind, body, and spirit. It is known to have therapeutic benefits, even easing arthritis pain. A popular form of kickboxing is known as aerobic or cardiovascular kickboxing. It combines elements of boxing, martial arts, and aerobics. A 10-minute warm-up of stretching, push-ups is followed by 30 minute kickboxing stint knee strikes, kicks, and punches. It improves balance and coordination while training you in self-defence. You can burn anywhere from 350 to 450 calories an hour.

Not your idea of fun? How about BOSU, ball exercise. The BOSU is an exercise with ball that's been cut in half with a platform at the bottom. You can use it balancing side-up to challenge lower body balance and stability or use platform to target upper body strength. Doing exercise on the BOSU requires you to maintain your centre of gravity over a surface that is constantly changing. It helps to improve balance and posture, gives a sense of body symmetry and helps learn appropriate weight transfer.

But before picking up that ball or doing the Salsa, keep in mind that fitness is not just about working out on high-end gym equipment, it is about doing it the right way. Before you start, make sure your instructor is not a quack. "Exercise should be done on a suspended wooden flooring as it absorbs shock and even the shoes should be appropriate," says Kiran Sawhney, owner of Fitnessolution and author of several fitness books. Adds Leena Mogre of Gold's Gym, Mumbai: "Fitness training must be a correct measure of cardiovascular activity, strength training and stretching. It is necessary to bring variations in the physical activity. If the body gets accustomed to a particular pattern it would lower the efficiency of the exercise." Also, contra-indicated workouts should not be performed, because when it comes to exercise, one size does not fit all.

