

■ By AVINASH KALLA

Your own little gym

The Swiss Ball is tested to support a weight up to 500 kilos and comes in five sizes to accommodate user variations. Its benefits are many — it helps in core conditioning, postural balance improvement, flexibility all of which in turn relax the body.

Apart from the Swiss Ball there are the lightweight Therabands and Tubings to develop muscles, firm legs and flat stomachs. These are elastic bands in varying degrees of resistance which allow you to perform hundreds of exercises for all muscle groups with the same piece of equipment.

The bands can effectively develop your upper body including your biceps, triceps, wings and shoulder. Attach them to hand grips and then standing on them try pulling them upwards and in mere 20 repetitions you can feel the effect.

A combination of the Swiss Ball with Tubings and Therabands can provide a whole range of exercises for complete body toning. These exercise tools have been endorsed by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and are available in different resistance levels. Many of these gizmos have immense therapeutic value as well. They are of help in rehabilitation programmes of people suffering from back, knee and ankle injuries.

Along with these tools there are gadgets that can tell your exact fitness levels at any instant. The fat percentage and calorie counting monitors can provide you a complete update on your fitness level.

"Generally, we are more concerned about our weight rather than the compositions of our fat percentage. Studies reveal that for men the ideal fat percentage should be between 15 and 18 percent, whereas for women it should be between 18



and 25 percent," says Kiran.

Then there are the calorie-counting meters that come in-built in watches and chest wraps. They are very handy as they help monitor data concerning calories burnt during work out.

The entire lot of a Swiss Ball, Tubing, Theraband, fat percentage and calorie counting monitors can fit in a small bag and can be taken wherever you go — on a vacation or an official tour or even to your office for a quick mid-day work out.

So stop being a gym rat. Go ahead and grab these new-age fitness tools. They have the power to change your life forever.

Even as architect Nirupma Misra was planning to leave office for the day, she got a call from her Mumbai headquarters that she would have to stay back

to prepare a feasibility report. She'd had a weary day with a difficult client and her backache was playing up. But she knew there was no escaping this urgent work.

Instead of downing a cup of coffee and closing her eyes for a few moments to refresh herself, Nirupma did something astonishing. She replaced her chair with an inflatable Swiss Ball. Within minutes her backache was gone and she was already looking relaxed and raring to go.

Magic? Not really. But one of the many new revolutionary contraptions that promise to keep you fit and healthy without regular visits to gyms or punishing exercising regimens.

Thanks to companies like Reebok, Nike, Adidas and others, the fitness market is seeing a

flood of light, portable new-age devices which not just promise to banish stress but also help build your abs, biceps, triceps and tone up other muscles of the body without the negative impact of heavy duty machines on joints, bones and muscles.

Therabands, Tubings, Swiss Balls, Stability Trainers, Rebounders, Hand Exercisers, Flex Bars, Fat Percentage Monitors, Calorie Counters all comprise a personal gym that you can carry in a small bag wherever you go. The portable nature of these pieces of equipment makes it easy to incorporate an exercise programme that fits into your lifestyle.

Leading companies say that these fitness tools have been developed after extensive research and have been tried and tested for their benefits. They are not just beneficial in body toning, strength building and conditioning but have a positive cardiovascular impact. Used extensively in the west, they are now picking up in India.

Take for example the inflatable Swiss Ball. This wonder apparatus can tone up any part of the body. You can work your abs, do push ups, squats and a number of other exercises to keep you in top form.

The basic principle of the Swiss Ball is make your body balance on a shaky ball. If you are sitting on the ball, you will keep trying to balance yourself using your back and abdomen muscles and in the process strengthening them, says Kiran Sawhney, a trained fitness expert from Speedo Institute in Canada.

Research shows that abdominal exercise on a Swiss Ball may be far more effective than conventional floor based techniques. Muscular activity in the abdominals is almost doubled with this gizmo. By combining five or six exercises in a mini-circuit, with a short rest between each circuit, you can get a complete and exhilarating workout.

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