

New Fitness Trends: Just Do It or Not?

Move over Pilates. Forget Zumba. A slew of new fitness trends are having a moment.

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Healthline sat down with two fitness experts and found out that you don't have an excuse not to exercise, after all. There are many new fitness activities that are beneficial for everyone. But beware: you may want to modify or steer clear of some of the more intense exercises that have gained popularity.

Let's Get Physical

Physical therapist Scott A. Weiss, director of rehabilitation services at Bodhizone for Human Performance and Sports Physical Therapy in New York, told Healthline that one of the hottest fitness trends involves body weight exercises that use your own body weight as resistance. The benefit: you can tone all your muscles, not just one muscle group.

"Instead of going to the gym and lifting weights, there are classes that combine gymnastics, dance, flexibility, and military training similar to boot camp. The equipment used is similar to what is used in an old-fashioned gym or physical education class," said Weiss.

If you can't go to class, you can do push-ups, chair-dips, air-squats, and calf-raises. "You can go to a park and put together "the daily dozen" and do a full body workout, using your body as resistance," said Weiss.

Don't have the strength or maybe you are returning from an injury? Not to worry. You can modify many exercises. "If you cannot do a regular push-up, then you can do a push-up on your knees," advised Weiss.

Is Cross Fit a Good Fit?

Cross Fit is a high volume, high intensity workout that is all the rage. But Weiss cautioned that it is an extreme workout, and if you are not used to the high intensity, or you lack experience with sports, Cross Fit can be extremely hazardous.

Cross Fit combines Olympic weight lifting, gymnastic exercises, and boot camp type exercises. "It's a multitude of body weight and fitness exercises that are high intensity. People do as many as they can in a short amount of time. When you do a high intensity, high volume exercise, it is dangerous for anybody. In a two-hour class you can really burn your body up," said Weiss.

In addition to possibly fainting, people who get injured are found to have high levels of phosphocreatine in their blood, which indicates tremendous muscle damage, he added. "The high intensity exercise has started to eat away at their muscle fibers. Injuries include tendonitis, a muscle strain or sprain, or ligament injury," Weiss said.

Some Like It Hot

Although yoga improves posture, flexibility, and muscle toning, Weiss said the latest trend, hot yoga, which is performed indoors in temperatures as high as 101 degrees, can be risky.

“The heat will help you stretch further, making sure you can get into the posture or pose, but you have to be cautious. Hot yoga sometimes creates too much heat in the body, so your ligaments stretch beyond their normal range. Because you are warmed up, you don’t feel how far you are stretching,” cautioned Weiss.

Weiss recommended starting with a regular yoga class and finding an experienced instructor who will guide and move you into a pose, instead of just demonstrating the (yoga) positions. He also advised drinking a lot of water before yoga class and using a slip-free mat. “When sweat drips off of you onto a hardwood floor, it gets slippery and you can fall,” he said.

Two to One Ratio

Interval Training (IT) is all the buzz. “IT involves constantly changing the ratio of walking to running. It should be a 2 to 1 ratio. Two is the walking (easy), and one is the running (hard). You run 30 seconds, walk for a minute, run for 30 seconds, walk for a minute. If you constantly do ten intervals, that’s your workout for the day. Anybody can do it, as long as you properly manipulate the ratios. But don’t do it too hard,” said Weiss.

Franci Cohen, a personal trainer and owner of Fuel Fitness in New York, added, “If are doing something that fluctuates between aerobic and anaerobic zones, and do short bursts of five to seven seconds of intensity, a 45-minute workout will more than suffice. That’s equivalent to an hour and a half of steady stream cardio,” she said.

Spinning and Dancing

Spinning is gaining traction. Spinning involves cycling on a bike that has a fixed wheel, which spins faster, making you pedal more and burn more calories. “There are no no-nos for that, except if you have a back problem,” said Weiss.

If you have low back problems, severe back pain, lumbar, or disc issues, Weiss advised a recumbent bike, which has a back rest. “If you have history of low back pain, arching over on a bike without the back rest is not the exercise for you,” he said.

You may not have a famous star to dance with, but dancing with any partner will get you toned and fit, it will help you lose weight, and it helps your brain,” said Weiss, adding, “If you push it too far, like anything else, you can injure yourself for a long time.”

Tai Chi and Swimming

Tai Chi, an ancient form of martial arts, is making a comeback. Tai Chi focuses on balance, body awareness, and breathing. “It’s great for anybody at any age, especially for the elderly, because it involves soft, easy exercises. Research shows it helps prevent falls, which are quite common in the older population,” said Weiss.

Although you can learn Tai Chi by watching a video, Weiss recommends you always follow up with an experienced instructor.

Swimming is taking a backstroke to water aerobics classes, and may be the best exercise for baby boomers' aching bodies. "The buoyancy of the water is good on the joints," said Weiss.

Spiderbands and Aerial Suspension

Cohen has created a new fitness sensation called Spiderbands, a total-body cardio resistance workout that leverages gravity and your body weight with other intense exercise modules, such as rebounding, kickboxing, and indoor cycling. The Spiderbands series is offered in New York and New Jersey.

"Spiderbands encompasses aerial suspension, where you leverage your entire body weight through a cardio and toning class using different apparatus, such as bands, ropes, straps, and hammocks that are suspended from the ceiling," said Cohen.

Cohen explained that since the resistance bands are buoyant, if you leverage your body weight on a band that moves with you, it takes a lot more out of your core. "For example, if you are using bands for arms, you are leveraging the body and engaging your core," said Cohen.