

MATT ROBERTS



Personal trainer to the stars with an unmissable column for anyone wanting to shape up

I want to get fit but I'm in a wheelchair

Q I USE a wheelchair due to a genetic condition that affects my muscles. I eat well, my weight is fine, but I know I'm limited as to what I can do in terms of exercise (access to a hydrotherapy pool is £40 a session). My question is, do you know any good seated exercises I can do?

A THE good news is that, yes, there are quite a few ways to work out while seated – and exercise for those with mobility needs doesn't always have to involve a hydrotherapy pool, as great as they can be.

If you are seated for long periods, then developing strength in the shoulders, arms, lower back and abdominal muscles will provide a combination of greater mobility and better posture, plus of course the greater sense of wellbeing associated with exercise.

For the home, I would advise anyone who isn't a gym person to invest in some exercise bands or cables with handles attached. They're not expensive and can be picked up from under £5 from online retailers.

You can use these for seated-rowing, single-arm row and reverse fly exercises.

I would also recommend buying some dumbbells of various weights – you can get them in the high street for as little as £25.

If you don't want to take the plunge and buy weights, you can of course use things like tins of beans and bottles of water.

Exercises include the shoulder press, lateral raises, triceps extensions and biceps curls.

On two days per week, try three to four sets of 18 to 20 reps, and on two days per week go heavier so you can only manage three to four sets of ten to 12 reps.

This will help with muscle-activation, strength and joint stability, and are 100 per cent worth doing regularly.

Abdominal strength is vital too. For those who use a wheelchair but have some mobility in the legs, it is possible to do knee tucks, in which you raise your legs off the chair and turn the pelvis in order to engage the abdominal muscles.

Aim to do that for as many reps as possible before fatigue sets in, and repeat for three or four sets. If this isn't an option, try a static contraction of the abdominal muscle, by tensing and holding tight for ten to 12 seconds, and repeating for five to six sets. This could possibly involve flexing the

spine and doing an upright 'crunch' in order to get the muscle tension.

If you can access a gym – I know not all are particularly wheelchair-friendly, but they are getting better – then the 'arm ergo' machines, a bit like bike pedals for the arms, are terrific for cardio development.

These are fully adjustable and allow you to get a great workout for your heart and lungs.

Dumbbells and cable columns in the gym can also be used while seated to give strength to the upper body.

Q I RECENTLY pulled my stomach muscle during a coughing bout, sustaining slight bruising under my rib cage. The injury has been confirmed by ultrasound examination. The advice I was given was to rest the muscle, otherwise it could take years to repair. The thing is, I play golf regularly and would like to get back playing as soon as possible. Are there exercises I can do to speed up the healing process?

A THIS sounds like an abdominal muscle tear or an intercostal muscle tear. Either way it hurts like hell, but only when you breathe.

The bad news is that anyone suffering such an injury will have to lay off the golf for four to six weeks.

It's tempting to start playing after a couple of weeks when the pain subsides, but (and I speak from personal experience) it takes a while to fully heal before going back to an explosive movement, or it will simply tear again and prolong the process further.

The good news is that exercise in general will speed up the healing process.

So, moderate cardiovascular exercise, whether that is hiking, cycling or slow jogging will all help.

Swimming will produce too large a movement and may tear the fibres again, and rowing has that potential too due to its high exertion level.

You can also benefit from doing strength exercises for your legs (squats, step-ups, lunges, leg press) and for your arms (avoid reaching above the head and exerting, but chest press, biceps curls, triceps extensions and seated row are all fine).

So, no need to stop exercise but just be careful for about six weeks and work on other parts of your fitness instead.



Prepare for rude health at all ages ...like Janet

NEVER backward in coming forward, Janet Street Porter, left, is fronting the We100 campaign, which aims to encourage everyone to live '100 healthy, happy years'.

It's a great idea, and the broadcasting legend, who's 70, was seen on television on This Morning trying out the circus-style gym class aerial yoga – which involves swinging from silk hammocks suspended from the ceiling.

Four-times-married Janet, currently a panellist on ITV's Loose Women, also revealed that she'd consider getting hitched again. And, with characteristic frankness, she said: 'People think that after 60, your bits drop off and that you stop having sex, but it's simply not true.'

Well, by being as fit as she is and trying new things, she's going the right way about it all. Exercise maintains great muscle structure, brain function, internal organ function and (vitality) strong hormone balance in the body.

If you want to stay active in the workplace, and in your private life, then lift weights, work your heart hard, reduce alcohol, sleep well, don't get stressed, laugh regularly – and be with someone you love.

MILLENNIALS (the generation born after 1982) are increasingly hitting the gym instead of the club on a Friday night, according to a newspaper report earlier this month. Some spin clubs are even trying to emulate the nightclub by serving alcohol post-workout. Most adults will probably sigh at yet more gimmicks by fitness chains that seem intent on gearing all their offerings to twentysomethings, when in fact, more than half of users of some gyms are over 50. But it is important to find ways to engage youngsters. If, in a few years' time, my daughter goes to an exercise class and has a couple of drinks afterwards, I think that would be better than her hitting bars and nightclubs into the wee small hours.

A NEW study has found that exercise during teenage years has a positive and profound effect on bone density in later years. This adds to what we already know about the problems of teenagers, especially girls – who avoid calcium-rich foods like dairy – being more prone to the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis in later life. It's up to adults to make sure they're doing themselves good. We need to lead by example. If they see you taking care of your body, they're more likely to do it too.

DO YOU HAVE A FITNESS OR DIET QUESTION FOR MATT ROBERTS?

Email matt.roberts@mailonsunday.co.uk or write to Health, The Mail on Sunday, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5TT. Matt can only answer in a general context and cannot respond to individual cases, or give personal replies.

THE RIGHT BITE ...WITH JACKIE LYNCH NUTRITIONAL THERAPIST

Eat Smart on the go: YOGURT

SWAP Low-fat fruit yogurt (150g)
Cals: 117, sugars: 20g

FOR Natural full-fat yogurt (150g)
Cals: 82, sugars: 8g

Eating low-fat yogurt isn't always the best option because when the fat is skimmed off, much of the yogurt's flavour is lost and replaced by extra sugars or additives.

● The Right Bite (Nourish Books, £6.99), out now.

YES PLEASE!

Hey Like Wow
This bottled water (sugar- and preservative-free) comes with a foil-sealed cap of powdered fruit and vitamins. Choose from calcium, B6, C and D and just push the cap down to inject flavour, shake and drink. 99p for 250ml, Tesco nationwide



Ask STUPID QUESTION

WHAT CAUSES COLOUR BLINDNESS?
Patricia O'Connor, optometrist at Maverick and Wolf Opticians, says 'Most

colour-blind people inherit it through a genetic fault, usually passed from mother to son. The mother will often be unaffected, as just a carrier of the faulty

gene. The condition occurs because some of the colour-sensitive cells in the eyes, called cones, are missing or don't function properly because of the fault.'