



Fitness focus

Get into CrossFit!

A new group-circuit workout is taking the world by storm. We find out what makes this fitness regime so special

Imagine an adrenaline-fuelled workout that not only promises to get you looking and feeling your strongest and fittest ever, but also pledges to restore confidence in your physical abilities by encouraging you to do cardio and strength exercises in a range of movement you haven't tried since school days. Sounds quite a combination, doesn't it? But that's what CrossFit – a type of group circuit-training class – delivers in an hour-long session.

WHAT IS IT?

A huge hit in the US, CrossFit was created in 1995 by fitness trainer Greg Glassman, who sought to develop a training programme for Santa Cruz police department that offered short, sharp bursts of intense exercise that works every

muscle in the body. Variety is key to CrossFit, and cardio, strength and conditioning moves are all combined to keep you on your toes. A typical class can consist of lots of cycles of press-ups, pull-ups, sprinting, squats and handstands, but you could even find yourself climbing ropes and using gymnastic equipment as well as free-weights and cardio machines.

You don't have to be super-fit to start, as the workouts can be adjusted to suit any age and fitness level. You just need the mindset to work hard. You might use lighter weights first and do fewer reps, for example, or a giant rubber band to help with pull-ups and as you improve, you'll use a thinner one, then none at all. And although you compete against others in your

group – and the clock – you should also find the class atmosphere and instructors supportive and encouraging.

'I feel stronger, I cycle faster, and I run better,' says Arifa Honour, an IT manager from Kent who started doing CrossFit a few months ago. 'Because of the variety, CrossFit gives everyone a chance to be good at something. I like the team spirit and how we compete to beat everyone else during the sessions.'

BODY BENEFITS

Because of the wide range of exercises performed in an average CrossFit class, you won't have to worry about doing additional cardio and strength training after a session.

'The aim of CrossFit is to increase your capability in all 10 components of fitness – strength, coordination, power, speed, stamina, agility, cardiovascular endurance, balance, accuracy and flexibility,' says Brian Sharp, owner and trainer of CrossFit Central London.

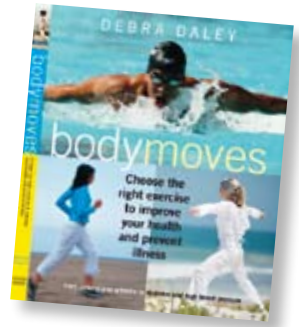
You'll start with three sessions a week. 'The workouts are high-intensity because you won't improve unless you push your body to the point it has to adapt,' he adds. Just remember to balance these strenuous workouts with plenty of rest and recovery afterwards to make sure you avoid injury.

GET INVOLVED

To find your nearest CrossFit club around the UK, log onto the mother-site www.crossfit.com and click on 'affiliates'. For a quick insight into the workouts of the day and action photos at CrossFit Central London, visit www.crossfitcentrallondon.co.uk.



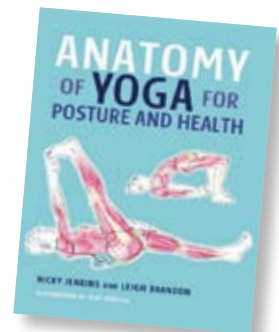
Fitness book of the month



Body Moves
by Debra Daley
(Cico Books, £14.99)

We all know exercise is good for us, but did you know you can treat specific physical and mental conditions with the right type of exercise? This absorbing book examines more than 50 common health conditions, from high blood pressure and depression to migraine and arthritis, and suggests the best fitness- and age-appropriate moves and workouts to rid your body of toxins, boost your immune system, reduce symptoms and enhance wellbeing. A must-read for those who prefer not to rely on prescribed medications.

Also out...



Anatomy of Yoga for Posture and Health
by N. Jenkins and L. Brandon

(New Holland, £17.99)
This fully-illustrated, easy-to-follow guide is divided into five sections. Each part examines a different area of the body that might need stretching and strengthening through yoga poses to improve your posture and health. It's the perfect place to start if you know your posture could be better.