

FIT YOUR LIFE

Your fitness priorities should change throughout your life. **Claire Finlay** of Transition Zone explains the right approach



Throughout a woman's life the female body undergoes a remarkable number of changes. Hormones, pregnancy, metabolism, diet and life pressures can all play a part in our energy levels and the way we look and

feel. Any exercise is beneficial but some forms of fitness are definitely more suited to others when it comes to the different life stages.

20^s The great thing about being in your 20s is that your body is still strong, supple and resilient. The bad thing is that you often end up punishing it with late nights and bad eating habits and you routinely fail to appreciate what you've got. Your 20s can be anxiety-provoking and lead to frantic exercise and a crazy pursuit of social media-induced 'perfection'. It's important to realise how wonderful this decade can be, so forget weight, think health. The mistake many 20-somethings make is opting for "endless cardio and crunches," says Claire Finlay of Transition Zone. "Cardio is great," she says, "especially if you mix it up so you're really pushing the body, but it's weight training that builds muscle definition, not to mention bone density, which will be crucial for staying active later on and preventing osteoporosis."

30^s Career and family demands may mean you're time-poor during this decade. The solution is to keep workouts short but targeted. Interval training and HIIT sessions work nicely as they torch through calories in minimal time. If you didn't add resistance training into your routine in your 20s, now's the time to do so. Weight training is imperative for maintaining bone density and staving off osteoporosis in later years. The idea that weights make you bulky is outdated and untrue and you don't need to be dead-lifting huge barbells; look out for kettlebell sessions, TRX (which use your own bodyweight) or simply add leg and wrist weights to your regular workout. The heavier the weight, the more muscle mass you'll create and, in turn, the more efficient your metabolism will be.

40⁺ Never has there been a more important time to keep on top of your fitness routine. Perimenopause (the precursor to the menopause) is closer, which means oestrogen levels are declining and fat tends to get stored around the tummy. While weight-bearing exercise such as walking or jogging will keep you mobile and your bones strong, strength training is crucial. Self confidence may plummet around now, so make sure you enlist

the advice of a good personal trainer or join a studio that offers small group classes and plenty of one-to-one guidance. The menopause can play havoc with your mood and anxiety levels so it's a good idea to include an element of 'centredness', which yoga perfectly provides.

No matter what your age, the key is to be consistent. Diarise your fitness sessions as you would a social event or a work meeting. See it as something that cannot be moved and that must be checked off as part of your to-do list. Stretching is also vital to improve circulation and reduce the chances of stiffness and injury, so invest in a good pilates class or at the very least make sure you dedicate 10-15 minutes each day to easing out muscle tension. Last, but not least, enjoy your fitness time, view it as a great way to connect with your mind and body. www.transitionzone.co.uk



■ Fitness trainer Claire Finlay is owner of the Transition Zone, which is offering 20% off Personal Training 5, 10 and 20 packs for new clients. 17 Heathman's Road, SW6 4TJ. 020 7736 2070 www.transitionzone.co.uk