

# The fitness FLITTER



Is it fine to be fickle when it comes to exercise? Patricia Carswell finds out...

Running was my first love. For a few months it was a grand passion. I lived and breathed it, ate, slept and blogged it. I scoured internet forums for discussions about personal bests and how to deal with stitches. I bored my friends rigid with updates about how far I'd run and posted

## Fit TRICKS Revealed

ASK THE EXPERT

**Natural health and fitness pro Dax Moy answers some of your most common flitting-related questions...**

**Q** I've started running but I'm not enjoying it. Should I move on to something new?

**A:** Absolutely! Why on earth would you stay with something you don't enjoy? The fastest way to drop out of fitness or sport altogether is to stay with one you don't like.

**Q** I've been going to the gym for a few months and I do a weekly fitness class. I enjoy it, but I feel like I've got stuck in a rut. What should I do?

**A:** Change it! Change the frequency, up or down, it doesn't matter. Change your intensity, swap long-distance runs for sprints, and exchange body pump for heavy lifting. Alter the time you spend training; make it shorter or longer than it currently is. Change the type; use weights, kettle bells, Indian clubs, yoga, Pilates, martial arts or anything you haven't used for a while.

**Q** How often do you think I should I change my fitness programme?

**A:** Exercise programmes are normally coming to the end of their 'shelf life' in terms of return on investment for effort and time after about 4-6 weeks. After that time you've adapted and get less and less for the same time invested.

**Q** How many different forms of exercise can you try at any one time?

**A:** It completely depends on your aim. If you're working on general fitness then a bit of everything is fine. However, if you're training for fat loss then higher intensity, short workouts are best and would include short weights workouts and sprints for best effect.

pictures of myself in action on Facebook. I signed up for my first race, and wept tears of joy at the finish when I crossed the line in a time I'd only dreamt of. I knew I was committed for life.

But then everything changed. As with so many love affairs, the burning passion suddenly cooled to a tepid indifference. I started to make excuses: I couldn't fit it into my busy schedule; my trainers were hurting; my kit was in the wash. The truth, though, was more brutal. I'd met someone else.

A casual invitation to a boxercise class was all it took. One session later I was smitten. No longer did I yearn for hilly trails and riverside sprints. All I needed to make me happy was a pair of gloves and a sparring partner. Overnight I was all about the right hooks and upper cuts (not to mention the muscles rapidly developing on my arms). I dug out an old skipping rope from under the bed and started daydreaming about *Million Dollar Baby*.

It was love. It was glorious. Until, that is, I discovered boot camp: an hour of adrenalin-filled, action-packed body pumping that left my quads screaming and my face burning. I came home full of excitement and within weeks my boxing gloves were starting to gather dust.

### fitness frenzy

The next couple of years saw numerous fitness passions come and go as I flitted from one type of exercise to the next. Zumba, salsa, body conditioning, weights, hiking, swimming; I tried them all. My cupboards filled up with assorted bits of clothing and equipment, bought in the first flush of enthusiasm and discarded as a new fad took its place in my affections. But I'm

not alone in my fickle habits. Fong Chau, 29, is another fitness flitter.

"Over the past year I've taken up running, spinning, body pump, zumba and street dance (my new craze)," she says. "I've periodically practised yoga for about five years, including Bikram, Hatha and Ashtanga. I've also done kickboxing."

For Fong, the challenge has been finding something she really loves. "I've always struggled to find an exercise I could really get into and stay disciplined enough to do," she admits. "I also find it hard to find a teacher who I can get on with, especially with yoga."

My own motivation was more an excess of enthusiasm; each new thing sounded more exciting than the last. The only problem was that although I loved the novelty that came with each change, I worried that I might not be getting the most out of each activity before I moved on to a new one.

The good news, however, is that there are serious



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fitness benefits to be gained from swapping from one type of exercise to the next. Natural health and fitness expert Dax Moy ([londonpersonaltrainingstudio.com](http://londonpersonaltrainingstudio.com)) explains: “Regularly changing activity can be beneficial in terms of creating a new challenge to the body from both a muscular and metabolic perspective, as well as improving individual biomotor abilities like speed, strength, agility, balance and co-ordination.”

Better still, it turns out that regular changes help to fight the flab, according to Dax. “When you begin a new training programme you may find that you burn 100 calories during your one mile run, yet after three months that same mile may only be costing you 50 or 60 calories due to the fact that you’ve become more efficient at it. If weight/fat management is your aim, why would you want to stay with an activity that takes up the same amount of time yet burns less?”

#### **winner takes all?**

Of course there are some downsides to fitness flitting.

Dax draws a distinction here between exercise and sport. “Exercise is usually performed for health-related reasons, whereas you play sport to win,” he says. “Sport requires repetition in order to lay down the neural ‘circuitry’ that creates precision in terms of speed, acceleration, direction, etc.”

In order to become skilled at a sport, you also need to put the hours in. “The 10,000-hour rule is normally held as the criterion measure for when an athlete (or musician) has laid down enough of a pattern to attain unconscious competence, where they perform immaculately almost without thinking,” he says.

That sort of commitment sounds like a lot to ask from someone as fickle as me, but there’s a surprising (and happy) ending to this tale. Just when I thought I’d never settle to anything, I discovered rowing. Eighteen months on, I think it’s safe to say that I’m in a stable, long-term, sporting relationship. I may not have reached the 10,000-hour milestone, but I do truly believe that I’ve found The One.

## *Real* **PEOPLE**

**LAURA COLLINS, 28, IS A SELF-CONFESSED FITNESS FLITTER...**



“I’ve always been a very active person and have had an interest in a wide variety of sports; I get bored easily, so always want to try something new. I crave the feeling of learning new things and making life more interesting and exciting.

“I started ballet dancing when I was young and also started playing squash at the age of seven – two types of sporting activity that couldn’t be more different! Eventually, I quit ballet so I could focus on squash, as I was beginning to play at a more competitive level. I was also a keen swimmer and played tennis as well.

“As I got older, my flitting became more prominent. I got interested in going to the gym, but soon learned that it got a bit dull and cost money. I started doing various home fitness videos (Tae Bo, step aerobics and even Mr. Motivator), but later I took up running and began to drop the home videos. I also started doing body combat classes, which I loved, but had to quit as I moved away from home.

“A year ago I took up salsa, bachata and merengue. I grew tired of doing all three so focused on salsa alone. Now my interest is waning, as I no longer live near the dance academy; yoga and Pilates are my new found love.

“Flitting from one activity to the next has certainly built up different muscles and stamina levels and has shown me what I do and don’t enjoy. It also gives me far more things to talk about to people – variety is the spice of life!”