

Jeni's Health & Fitness Tips

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Hi Everyone!

I recently visited the Fitness Expo at Darling Harbour to check out the latest fitness equipment. I was particularly interested in Whole Body Vibration Platforms. These first came into use in the 1970's and were invented to exercise Russian Cosmonauts. In the zero gravity environment of outer space the cosmonauts lost bone density and muscle mass. These vibration platforms were used to help restore their bodies when they returned to earth.

It's amazing how our bodies respond to their environment. In zero gravity, strength is not required as nothing weighs anything. Recognising this, the body adapts – muscles are not required. On the other hand, if we continuously lift weights, the body adapts by building stronger muscles and bones. That old adage "If you don't use it, you lose it" applies to everything we do.

Anyway, I tried a few different vibration platforms and was baffled by the science. Of course every exhibitor told me theirs was the best design. There are variations in types of vibration, pivotal, up and down and side-to-side. The strength of the frequency and G force also varied. After some research I believe that the frequency should be adjustable from 15Hz to 50 Hz and the amplitude should vary from 2mm to 4mm. I am still somewhat confused and need to do more research. Watch this space.

As I stood and sat on these vibration platforms I felt at first as if I were experiencing an earthquake, then as they turned up the intensity my muscles began to contract involuntarily. Just standing on this machine activated all my leg muscles quite strongly. At 30 Hertz, it means that the muscles are doing 30 contractions a second when you are just standing still.

What a wonderful way to keep muscles toned for those who are unable to exercise due to age, infirmity or paralysis.

The manufacturers claim that these machines:

- Promote muscle growth
- Increase bone density
- Promote a greater range of motion
- Decrease the stress hormone cortisol
- Help heal injuries
- Help weight/fat loss and decrease cellulite
- Build stamina
- Increase blood circulation

Using these vibration platforms is contraindicated for groups such as pregnant women and those with pacemakers so do check that it is suitable for your needs before you rush out and buy one.

Having suffered a recent fracture and being postmenopausal, I am particularly interested in drug free ways of increasing my bone density. They say 10 minutes a day is all you need. I will be making further investigations and would love to hear from any of you who have experienced a vibrations platform.

Yours in health,

Jeni

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