

FIT FOR LIFE with Carol Westmorland

Walk this way for great lower body toning

Anyone keeping up to date with recent news will know that I was temporarily without two of my prized bikes. Indeed, following my last article about cycling to work, you could be forgiven for thinking that I would now be on foot! Fortunately, I still have my training bikes.

That said, I am a great believer in walking. It is easy to shape up for summer. A brisk one-mile walk in 20 minutes burns around 100 calories – as much as swimming for 10 minutes, playing football for 12 minutes or doing aerobics for 16 minutes.

Walking properly is extremely effective at toning the lower body. Ambling will not do the job. This is not the time to be going at a pace you would if shopping. So, unless you're a bargain hunter and are always in a dash, you have to raise your game and heart rate. Like all things active, you get back what you put in.

If you fancy turning a few heads with your confident style then practice lengthening your neck and spine keeping your shoulders back and down as you walk.

Draw your navel to your spine, lifting your pelvis, and imagine 'headlights' on your hipbones keeping them on full-beam with no dipping! Walk heel to toe, rolling through the foot with elbows tucked in and swinging arms to help propel you along.

Cyclists sometimes do it and walkers definitely do it: wiggling hips 'duck' fashion is not just unattractive. Your posture is thrown out of alignment as well. I am no fan of heels. I like to move too quickly. My sister Joanne can't be parted from her heels even during rehabilitation for a badly broken leg!



Walk in small steps. It's actually easier on the joints and will give you a better workout. ASICS have a new specially configured women's walking shoe which promises to cushion your every step. They are designed to enhance the foot's natural gait and if budget allows may be worth a try.

Changing your terrain is also beneficial and for those of you who need a reason then there can't be a better one than a beautiful view. Off road is wonderful for an all-over body workout especially if you have to climb over stiles and jump across streams. Our stunning hills make it possible to have our very own outdoor equivalent of a step machine with the added motivation of actually reaching the top. You should have your breath taken away in more ways than one.

Upping the pace allows your heart and lungs to be trained to be efficient at taking in oxygen, using it and distributing it. If you aim to raise your heart rate three times a week you will soon feel the rewards.

Finally, if the calming sea and salt air is more your thing then sand is fabulously resistive and will soon acquaint you with your gluteus maximus. I doubt history has ever recorded anyone complain about having a firm bottom.

Take time for a trip to Port Carlisle. Remember well-secured shoes to avoid ending up running in your socks – husband take note! Now all you have to do is 'walk this way'.

Carol Westmorland lives in the Eden Valley. She is a Cycling Time Trials national champion, clocking up 445 miles in 24 hours. She also teaches pilates. www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk

LIFE COACH with Jo Hampson

Chin up, top banana, and other strategies...

"Hello! How are you?!"

What was your first reaction to the question? It's a common and cheery greeting among friends, family and colleagues – but do you give a reply? Do you expect a reply? Personally, if asked how I am, I'd like a chance to answer!

How often do you bump into someone, greet them and ask how they are and then wish you hadn't? The gloomy response "Oh, you know, fair to middling I suppose" arrives and the sad thing is that by the time you have heard how awful everything is, any joy at meeting them is gone and you are now

feeling gloomy yourself.

If the next time someone asked you how you felt you replied "Great, thanks!" you just might be making their day. Even if things are not that great, smiling and saying something positive and upbeat goes a long way to lifting the spirits.

I used to have a phrase I used when anyone asked me how I was. I always said "I'm a top banana thank you!"

OK, so it may have been a little odd, but it always made people smile – and when they smiled, I smiled, and so we all felt better.

We can all do so much to make us and those around us feel better. There is

value in that old saying "chin up". Try it! What happens when you put your chin up? Your chin goes up and your head goes back; more air fills your lungs and your shoulders drop. As soon as this happens you can just feel tension being released and stress falling away. Chin up may just be a throw away line, but it doesn't half work. So go on give it a go. Put your chin up, tell someone you feel great and see what happens; make your and someone else's day.



Jo Hampson and Georgina Perkins run life-change company Stepping Off, based in Shap