

FIT FOR LIFE with Carol Westmorland

Keeping fit and healthy can be child's play

The summer holidays can be hectic and full of temptations, and usual exercise routines are often sidelined.

Help is at hand. Have you ever dreamed of having your own gym in your back garden? Putting one together is easier than you may think. Look around and you might find that you already have one lurking under the guise of children's play equipment. Even if you don't, you could do a lot worse than invest in something that will provide your team with a fun way of using energy.

The British Heart Foundation want to get the message across by supporting the trampoline and have teamed up with Trampled Underfoot to launch the 'Bouncing with Health' campaign. It is the ultimate piece of garden gym equipment: it strengthens bones and muscles, and absorbs 80 per cent of the shock so is kind to the joints. If you are a novice, it is recommended that you begin by lying down flat on the trampoline and without using your hands, try to build up momentum so you can stand up. If you can do this without too much laughter you will eventually succeed. You will then have raised your heart rate and strengthened your core muscles.

To ensure fair play use a stopwatch and take turns to interval train. Using 30 second intervals start by jumping, bringing your knees to chest then do 30 seconds of jumping bringing your heels to your bum.

If your idea of fun is having the breeze in your hair you could swing into action. A chunky wooden swing is an attractive feature to any garden. Evoking childhood memories it is an all-rounder – just draw your navel to your



spine as you perform the swing action and squeeze your bum for a great toning effect.

Basketball could also be for you. It is one of the best ball games for burning calories – as much as 800 an hour – and when you practice different throws, which is great for toning. An overhead throw will work your triceps while a chest pass will work your chest and back. Concentrate on good technique and you will soon be hooked.

Remember Spacehoppers? Cheap and fun and guaranteed to get those stomach muscles working. Make sure your hopper is firm to touch to give you the best workout then practice relays. I also love the happy feeling evoked by the humble seesaw, exercising your thighs, hips and bum if you use one to perform slow squats. Sit a heavy object at one end – a husband perhaps – then move up and down slowly without putting your full weight on the seat.

Finally an inflatable pool is another summertime special. A perfect cool-off after all your hard work, some are now designed to come up to an adult's waist height and are up to 12ft long. Buy some aqua weights which strap to your ankles or wrists then you can wade through the water and jog on the spot. If yours is just for paddling in then lie on your back and move your arms and legs in a scissor motion; push against the resistance and forget what the neighbours may think.

Happy holidays!

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

I'm going to change my life...

That's a bit of a tall order! I'm going to lose three stone. I'm going to get a qualification. I'm going to write a book. I'm going to walk the Pennine Way. What do all these ideas have in common? They're big! They require work and application. Wouldn't it be nice if achieving our goals were easy? Well, it can be.

Once you decide to make a change and you are ready to take action, you need to be able to take a first step and to know you are on the road. Most of us would like to change a few things but some days when we feel overwhelmed and think "I want to change my life!", it all seems too big to do and we feel it isn't worth trying. So break the big change

down into little steps, and reward yourself along the way. Weight-loss clubs work for those who really want to lose weight because the goals set are small, achievable steps; progress can be seen and celebrated and members are motivated to take the next step.

Work out your first steps. Plan them, give each step diary time and give each step a realistic deadline. I have found that if it isn't in the diary to be done at a specific time on a specific day, it never gets done.

If you want to write a book, make a plan. Do you need to do a creative writing course first? Do you have an idea for the plot? Have you written it down? Have you bought a notepad to have with you at

all times for the good ideas you have? If it is a dream to run a marathon, have you bought some running shoes? You'll need some to take that first training step!

If you can see that the first step is the first of many that you have mapped out; if you have given yourself realistic timescales and – crucially – if you reward yourself with a treat every few steps, then it is so much more likely that you will be fitter, published, more qualified or have "changed your life" than if your goals just remain as dreams that are too big...



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