

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

If you've ever owned a TV, chances are you've seen your fair share of late-night infomercials touting the latest greatest fitness trend that will magically make you fit, healthy & happy overnight! Between celebrity fitness videos, sauna suits, and power balance bracelets, it seems there's no gizmo, gadget, or get-skinny-quick gimmick we won't try. A healthy physique will always be in style, but too often people want the easy way out. While fitness trends come and go, the endless supply of infomercials and fitness fads are often meant for one purpose, to slim down your wallet. From weight loss pills & powders to almost everything infomercial its crazy to think about the odder, yet strangely popular ways people have marketed health & fitness over the years.



If you watch enough episodes of "Storage Wars" chances are you'll see them come across one of the classic 1960's vibrating belts that became the fitness fad of the decade. A machine with a huge strap designed to shake the living you know what outta you until all your fat just melted away. Sure, those vibrating lap belts seemed like a silly way to get in shape, but that didn't stop people from making many more jiggy things like the Shake Weight. This vibrating dumbbell (emphasis on dumb) became sensation on novelty alone. Over 2 million Shake Weights were sold in the first year on the market at 20 dollars apiece, which is 40 million dollars in revenue. Wowzas! Despite the fact that the muscles of the arms, chest, shoulders and back are not moving through a proper range of motion the makers of the Shake Weight claim to be able to deliver muscle and strength building results. This flies in the face of just about every bit of existing legitimate scientific data on the subject of muscle and strength training. Furthermore, the muscles of the biceps and triceps are among the smallest muscles of the body, and "exercising" them provides very precise stimulus. Well the vibrating belt & shake weight may be good for a laugh, Save your time, money and effort.

The seemingly ageless Suzanne Somers may have been the beloved "blonde bimbo" Chrissy from "Three's Company" but she was also the face of 80s "As Seen on TV" fitness. The "ThighMaster" is easily one of the most memorable

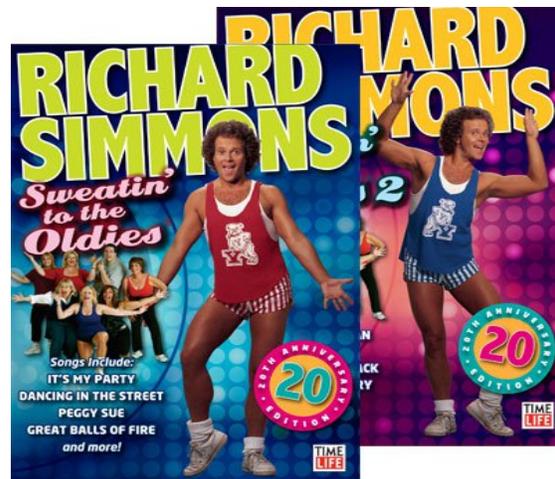
fitness fads of the 80's. But there's a reason her ThighMaster is piling up in landfills or collecting dust in most basements across Canada. With this simple butterfly-shaped device, you can squeeze your way to an amazing body! Sounds too good to be true, right? Well It is. If you can do an exercise sitting on your couch well watching TV, unfortunately it is not an exercise :(



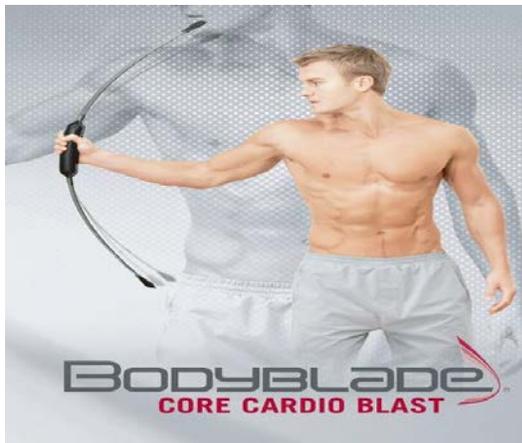
Remember those coloured bracelets everyone was wearing a few years ago? Not to be confused with the yellow live strong bracelets in support of cancer research. I'm talking those silly bracelets with the hologram in the centre. For \$29.99, this performance bling claims to improve balance, strength, and flexibility through special hologram frequencies. The reality, studies have found that "Power Balance Bracelets" actually work no better than a placebo. So any improvements to that game are, as they say, all in the head. Power balance bands or power balance bracelets do not work. Period. In fact, you can now purchase one at your local "Dollarama". There are absolutely no scientific studies showing that power balance bracelets work. And there is no earthly science even remotely saying that we can capture frequencies and bottle it in a plastic hologram. Personally, I think they look pretty cool. However if you still wear one for any reason other than a fashion statement you are just openly endorsing your lack of basic critical thinking skills more than anything else. LOL. Power Balance, the makers of these bands was sued for fraud, settled out of court, and then promptly filed for bankruptcy. go figure...

If there's one thing that's for sure in all of this it's that people will forego nearly anything to get fit without putting in any effort, and that includes a fad that is still sadly going pretty strong. Toning shoes and/or Fitflops. These oddly shaped shoes claim to sculpt our bodies just by walking. Since 2011 companies like Sketchers & Reebok have used many celebrities to promote these shoes as way to get in shape. Six years later, this fitness trend is still around touting that these shoes will surly lift your gluts, improve posture, burn more calories, tone your muscles, reduce joint stress, Oh - and banish cottage

cheese thighs. But don't stop paying your gym membership just yet. In a recent study, 12 active women aged 19-24 completed a dozen five-minute intervals on a treadmill while wearing Skechers Shape-Ups, MBT, and Reebok's EasyTone Reinspire shoes, researchers monitored how hard they worked -- technically called exercise response. A second group of 12 women aged 21-27 performed a similar battery of five-minute treadmill tests in various regular shoes while researchers measured muscle usage in their calves, quads, hamstrings, gluts, back, and abs. The results? There was no significant difference in calories burned or muscle usage between the four types of shoes. Shocking!!! I know. That said, if these shoes are serving as a motivator for individuals to walk or get moving more often, that is a good thing, even if they don't produce the dramatic toning and calorie-burning results people think they are getting.



It's almost impossible to speak about fitness fads and not have Richard Simmons shimmy and shake his way into your mind. "Sweatin to the Oldies" is one fad that worked! If Richard Simmons was leading the way into battle, you'd better believe I'd follow! If you want to get fit and have fun doing it, Richard Simmons exercise videos will help you do just that. Simmons was the funny, unlikely fitness buff who seemed to be everywhere in his trademark short, short, striped shorts tank top and curly do. Richard Simmons isn't going to tell you that he has a magic pill to help you lose 50 pounds overnight. He's willing to work out with you to help you reach your fitness goals. You can have a great time listening to music and having fun while shedding pounds with the videos from this famous fitness guru. I can't think of a more glorious way to lose weight and get fit.



Bodyblade has been around since 1991, which means it was launched during the golden age of home-shopping networks and late-night infomercials. Bodyblade is a 1.5-pound, 2.5- to 5-foot-long blade. You shake it, and it shakes your body back, toning your muscles through once again vibration and muscle resistance. According to Bodyblade, other workout systems operate under the principle of lifting weights or stretching a band, but the Bodyblade works on the opposite premise. When the ends move, inertia wants to keep them in motion. It's up to the exerciser to resist. Whoa there! Slow down. No need to get all Newton's law, scientific on us with this vibrating single ski thingy. Much like its cousin, the Shake Weight, Bodyblade owners run the risk of public ridicule because they look like out-of-control maniacs when they use them. Do they work? The Bodyblade was invented by physical therapist Bruce Hymanson, a man whose recent photos indicate that he looks like a retired superhero. To be fair, there are physical therapist who use it to help work small shoulder muscles in the event of a shoulder injury and supposedly for that, it does work. But having ripped small shoulder muscles won't take care of that pile of chicken wings and bucket of beer you just consumed.



A stationary cycle workout, otherwise known as "Spinning" was invented in the year 2000 by Johnny Goldberg, who eventually began going by the name Johnny G. He spent 10 years designing a workout program that could be done on a stationary bike, combining basic cycling movements, motivational coaching techniques, breathing awareness and heart rate training. The result: the fitness fad called "Spinning". It is a low impact exercise. This means that it won't put pressure on knees and joints, as other aerobic or running exercises do. Well any type of exercise is known to relieve stress. A spinning class can be an especially effective stress reliever because

the workout is intensive and it is a class where you can meet people and socialize. Spinning classes are held by an instructor that will motivate you throughout the workout. In addition, there will be music, which will make the class more entertaining. Choosing to ride doesn't mean giving up all other exercise and trading in those weights for spin shoes. But if you're healthy and injury-free, adding cycling into your workout regimen a few times a week can only advance your fitness. This is a fitness fad that stays!



This fad has been one that's had the power to stick around throughout the years. Developed in the early 1920's by Joseph Pilates of Germany, pilates is a physical fitness practice that was designed to strengthen both the mind and body. While traditional strength training exercises are weight bearing and tend to build short bulky muscles - the type most prone to injury. Pilates elongates and strengthens, improving muscle elasticity and joint mobility. Somewhat similar in concept to Yoga, pilates requires a strong core to perform specific controlled movements. Contemporary Pilates even incorporates weighted balls, foam rollers, and resistance bands. No bad posture here folks! Pilates programs are praised by everyone from athletes to office workers for its ability to correct posture in the key areas of the abdominals, hips/back, and neck. Basically counteracting the effects of slouching. However, if pilates is your only primary exercise method, I'd highly recommend that you do a full-body weight training routine at least 1 time per week. And don't forget to include cardiovascular training as well, since pilates does not involve much cardiovascular work. I highly recommend attending the terrific YUSA fitness classes. Where the program includes pilates/yoga, strength training as well as cardio workouts. :)

The Fitness fads of yesteryear continue to come and go. Some of them highly effective, and some well, were still not sure?? We're not here to judge. We're here to be embrace our health and have fun doing it.