



Britons are leaving the gym

For the first time since gyms made their way into the public consciousness in the Eighties, there has been a sudden and rapid decline in the number of people joining them. Thanks partly to changed lifestyle choices and partly to the economy, it seems clear that we have started avoiding gyms. On the one hand, we have realised that they don't work. According to statistics, almost a quarter of British adults are judged to be obese and, if current trends continue, 60 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women will be clinically obese by 2050. On the other hand, there is a growing realisation that gyms are sterile environments, and it has become obvious to consumers that there are other, more appealing, means of burning calories such as cycling to work or even walking the dog.

According to Dr Smith Maguire, gyms focus on “image rather than health”, which tends to mean that their customers' dedication is maintained for only a limited period. “If people exercise simply to eliminate fat, not because they enjoy it, they will either give up before they accomplish their objective or they will reach their objective and then go back to their old habits of inactivity” says Martin Hagger, a social and health psychologist at the University of Nottingham.

Another reason why gyms are not fulfilling their promise is that, while we have paid up, we haven't always turned up. Many surveys have indicated that, six months after joining, about 60 per cent of new gym members don't attend the gym any more.

What has been lost, it seems, is an accurate perception of what activity means. Thus, many studies have linked moderate daily activity to more significant and longer-lasting improvements in health than the occasional 60 to 90-minute session at a gym. In a 2001 study, Professor Klaas Westerterp, of Maastricht University in the Netherlands, found that people who did moderate amounts of daily activity burnt more calories than those who performed short but intense gym sessions at lunchtime or after work. Activity need not be done in a single session at a gym. Current government recommendations suggest that 30 minutes of moderate exercise is enough to make an impact on health, but more is obviously better. “This eliminates the common excuses of not having the time or money to exercise,” says Dr Lang of the Association for the Study of Obesity. “Do whatever you enjoy and you are likely to want to do more - gardening, walking, cycling to work, playing football with the kids. Just get moving.”

Adapted from The Times, March 4th 2008.

Vocabulary: turn up (V) = appear, arrive, come.



1. Say whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE. Explain WHY using your own words OR finding evidence in the text. NO marks are given for only TRUE or FALSE. (1 point)

- a) The number of people avoiding gyms has recently increased.
- b) The majority of new gym members stop attending the gym six months after joining it.
- c) People have correct and exact perceptions of what activity means.
- d) People who perform short but intense gym sessions burn more calories than those who do moderate amounts of daily activity.

2. In your own words and based on the ideas from the text, answer the following question. NO marks are given for responses copied directly from the text. (1 point)

- a) According to some experts, why is customers' dedication maintained for only a limited period?

3. Find in the text words or phrases which mean the same as the following (1 point):

- 1) Increasing in size, amount or degree.
- 2) Attractive or interesting.
- 3) To stop, abandon or cease.
- 4) To be related or connected in some way.

4. Follow the instructions for each question and answer them (2 points):

4.1. Fill in the blanks the following sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

A: 'Hello Jane. Why are you so tired?'

B: 'I(do some exercise).'

A: '..... (go) to the gym?'

B: 'No, I didn't. I went jogging with Tom'.

4.2. Finish the sentence so that it means the same as the sentence before it.

'Although we had really bad weather, we went hiking'.

In spite of

4.3. Turn the following sentence into the passive voice.

'I didn't realise someone was recording our yoga class'

I didn't realise that

4.4. Rewrite the following sentence in reported speech:

'Why is Pilates becoming so popular?', Carol asked.

Carol asked

5. Look at the underlined part of the words below. Three of the words in each line (A, B, C, D) contain the same sound. Circle the word which contains a different sound (1 point):

5.1. A) wear B) care C) year D) where

5.2. A) bread B) day C) name D) wake

5.3. A) cut B) turn C) duck D) up

5.4. A) see B) likes C) same D) easy

6. Choose ONLY ONE of the following options. (4 point.s)

Write a composition of 120-150 words on:

- a) Why do you think people like going to the gym? What about you? Explain.
- b) To what extent do you agree with the famous Latin quotation *mens sana in corpore sano* (that is, a healthy mind in a healthy body). Explain.