

Ninemsn Health Road Test – Power Plate

By Sarah Reid, April 7, 2008

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A vibrating platform that improves your functional fitness simply by standing on it? If it's good enough for Elle, Kylie, Madonna and Australia's spokesmodel, Erika Heynatz, (who's svelte, bronzed body is perched alluringly below the words "I like to think I'm working smarter, not harder" on the homepage of the Power Plate website) we thought it was worth looking into.

What it is: Power Plate is a vibrating platform that uses a technology called "Acceleration Training" to transmit waves of energy throughout the body, making your muscles contract faster. This helps your body do more "work" in less time (as in a full-body workout in 15 minutes), explains Power Plate master trainer, Kristy Wetherell. "Acceleration Training can increase your core strength, stability, coordination, power, speed, flexibility and mobility," Wetherall says. "It can also increase post-exercise regeneration — all on a single machine."

Power Plate has also been found to decrease cellulite, increase bone mineral density and reduce the severity of menstrual cramps.

How it works: Dressed in gym clothes, the user is required to stand on the platform while the machine vibrates. A Power Plate trainer will then "prescribe" you exercises (ranging from squats to tricep dips) to do on the platform, depending on your goals and capabilities. And yes, it still works if you just want to stand on it and read a magazine.

Three, 15-minute sessions weekly are recommended.

Difficulty: It's nowhere near as tough as going for a run, but "the muscles you target typically fatigue in under a minute and you'll certainly know about it," says Wetherell. "At the very least you should develop a decent glow during a session."

Target market: It's ability to reduce injury-recovery time makes Power Plate perfect for athletes (it's used by everyone from the German national soccer squad to the Boston Red Sox), but the machine can be used by anyone looking to improve their fitness and wellbeing — not to mention those with disabilities or health complications that can be relieved by Acceleration Training.

The catch: In some European countries it's been promoted as the only fitness tool you'll ever need, but Australian Power Plate masters are more conservative.

"Acceleration Training on Power Plate has the capacity to be that most amazing exercise tool anyone has used as part of their exercise regime, but it's best to complement [sessions] with other forms of cardio exercise that align with your individual needs," says Wetherell.

The verdict: Apart from the strange buzzing feeling caused by the vibrations, exercising on Power Plate feels like cheating. You finish each session feeling fitter, stronger and with an endorphin rush— but barely a sweat to show for it!

Cost: Purchase the my3 model for a cool \$5,500, or ask your gym about rates. "Some facilities include Power Plate training as part of their membership fee and others have a session charge, which could cost up to \$45 per visit," says Wetherell.

Contact: Call 1800 633 009 or visit www.powerplate.com.au.