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power on a plate

Jiggling has never felt this good. The Power Plate range of vibrating platform machines, which has celebrity fans such as Madonna, Sting and Donatella Versace, works on the principle of vibration training. As users hold various poses on the platform, the contracted muscles are vibrated between 25 and 50 times a second to improve muscle tone, body strength, circulation, flexibility and bone mineral density. The difference between Power Plate and other vibrating platform machines is that the base plate vibrates up and down and from side to side. It sounds complicated but it's as easy as standing up straight.

At my first session, trainer Michelle Buley guides me through stances for each muscle group. These are gym favourites such as bicep curls, tricep dips, lunges and squats, except that instead of actually curling my arm or sinking into a squat I hold the position for about 30 seconds, and the machine does the rest. All up, the session lasts about 20 minutes, with plenty of chatting in between.

Over 10 sessions, Buley increases the hold time for each posture and varies the vibrating speed of the platform. I exchange my usual hour-long pump classes for the short sessions, yet I retain tone and firmness without the heavy lifting.

Machines can be purchased but they are becoming increasingly available in good gyms, and it does help to have a trainer who can mix up the postures. For me, it has the same effects as a strength-training session at the gym in less time, with less sweat and less risk of injury – and that's got to be good. For more details, visit www.powerplate.com.au.

health



Firm in a flash

Getting into shape doesn't take long with the latest body-sculpting short cuts

Editor: Alexandra Spring

PRESSURE TRAINER

The best way to gauge the popularity of a new treatment is by the number of alight-skinned socialites in the waiting room. When I bump into yet another familiar face exiting a Hypoool session of a discreet Sydney address, I know I'm onto something good. The Hypoool body-shaping system was developed by Dr Norbert Egger, an Austrian sports scientist. While conventional wisdom declares it impossible to localise fat reduction, Egger theorised that fat burns more efficiently in areas with better blood circulation. His Hypoool machine combines a comfortable reclining bed, for the upper body, with a stationary bike enclosed in a vacuum

chamber, for the lower body. The client lies back and pedals while the pressure in the chamber fluctuates rhythmically to stimulate blood circulation and power away fatty areas around hips, bottom, stomach and thighs.

At my first session a consultant takes my measurements, then fits me with a heart rate monitor and thermometer. I lie back and start pedalling. Every five minutes the air is sucked out of the chamber. It's a strange sensation, but not unpleasant, and while I pedal I keep my eye on the revolution-per-minute and temperature counters. Although I'm pedalling quite vigorously I still manage to read gossip magazines at the same time.

Half an hour later and I'm done. I feel light and buoyant, but not as if I have done strenuous exercise. The consultant advises me to follow a few commonsense diet rules and to exercise on non-Hypoool days. She also recommends at least three sessions a week.

After about five sessions, the shape of my upper legs begins to tighten, and after 12 visits there is a significant difference in the measurements of my lower body as well as the firmness – and I've caught up on all the gossip. For further details, visit www.hypoool.com.au.

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SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

Any woman who has ever experienced the symptoms of "heavy legs" – poor circulation, puffiness, increased cellulite and fluid retention – will love Inlight's range of in-salon treatments. This Italian system is based on the principles of biomorphology, which classifies everyone into specific body types.

The methodology is employed to diagnose and treat beauty issues, using massage (both manual and machine assisted) and health supplements to kick-start sluggish systems and help lift the body of toxins. Inlight technician Raffaella Lombardi is a convincing expert who can assess your particular concerns and provide a realistic plan of attack. Just two treatments into the program, I noticed a definite reduction in fluid build-up gradually around the thighs and ankles.

The Inlight system gently and non-invasively kneads and pummels cellulite-affected areas, aiming to break down "stuck" fat and increase circulation, improve lymphatic flow and, hopefully, encourage weight loss. The 65-year-old Inlight model who came in for treatment after my session swore by Inlight: if her bottom and thighs were anything to go by, it's worth a shot. For more information, visit www.inlight.com.au. AC