

GET IT 'N' FLAUNT IT

Looking for an alternative to the gym? Then make like the stars with these three stellar fitness programmes

Amanda Phelan

amanda.phelan@gmail.com

WE ALL know the problem. You want to get in shape; you know it will make you look better and feel fitter. but how to get started? Or even harder, keep going after you have.

Perhaps you've tried the gym membership or the yoga classes, but found it doesn't work for you. If so, maybe what you need is something different - and the solution might be just around the corner.

In a Crumlin park, a converted Fairview warehouse or a Dun Laoghaire Pilates studio, we mere mortals can follow the fitness regimes that help the famous it.

Setting a goal like looking good for your summer holiday is an excellent start, say the fitness experts. And there's plenty of star-style routines on offer, often at non-stellar prices.

So where to begin? Here are three possible options to get you in shape for the summer and hopefully keep you that way for the future.

Personal trainer

Personal trainer John Connor doesn't try to soften the blow. The 27-year-old, red-headed Dubliner begins by pinching a client with a set of calipers that measures the fat accumulation on different parts of your body. The size of the deposits tell him a lot about your diet and wellbeing, he says, as he grabs hold of a sizeable lump of flesh beneath my shoulder blade. "Your body doesn't tolerate carbs, and you're quite stressed", is the cheerful verdict. "There are some issues with your liver as well," he adds.



Tough enough: Eoin Lacey and John Connor (right); a slim, trim Ronan Keating

"There are some issues with your liver as well," he adds. Connor's advice: clean yourself out through a food detoxification programme to shift stubborn fat deposits. He hands over a list of foods for the next four weeks: loads of green veg, grapefruit, protein (eat a handful every meal), nuts and juices - no fruit at first, and no grains for at least two weeks. No matter how many times you read the list, breakfast rolls and scones from Avoca café aren't on it.

"A detox means no grains, no alcohol, and no tea or coffee," Connor intones, his own physique a testimony to his advice. Easy for him to say.

It's pretty tough going at first, with symptoms including headaches and cravings. The coffee withdrawal is worst on day three, and it never really gets easy to stop eating toast.

But Connor's regime makes a lot of women happy at the altar. "Brides are the best," he says. "They'll do everything you tell them to - they've got motivation, because they're obsessed about fitting into that dress."

Male clients are happy with the results, too. Singer Ronan Keating says his fit new look and seven per cent body-fat reading is all thanks to Connor's training.

The trainers approach is understated but tough, and a typical workout starts with full squats, then back pulls, shoulder pushes and squats.

And just when you think it's over, Connor marches you up and down, pulling a specially designed weight-loaded sled attached to your waist with a rope and belt. This takes a bit of humility as it's done outside the gym, where people stroll by wondering why you would pay to perform like a husky.

After exercise, Connor recommends having a green drink (such as barley grass) and water with good salt added. It all sounds like torture, but day seven into the detox and the headaches go, energy levels start to rise, and you can even begin enjoying the exercise regime. And my 19pc body-fat reading is down one notch towards the target 14pc.

On day eight, with a magnanimous sweep of a muscled shoulder, Connor says one coffee is OK. "Only the one," he grins, "before you go on a serial-killing spree." He can laugh, but guess who'd get shot down first?

Contact: john.connor@lycos.com

