

Evolution of exercise



JOYCE TEO

It is no longer repetitive as new forms of training make it fun and relevant to people's lives

If you never got around to signing up for that Latin dance-inspired Zumba class, well, you just might never have to any more, with the growing number of new workouts that have taken Singapore by storm.

They include fresh spins on physical training, such as MovNat, which builds practical skills such as climbing and lifting; and fusion

exercises such as KpopX Fitness, which blends two existing disciplines – Korean pop dance and aerobics – into an all-new workout.

Apart from giving people new activities to enjoy, alternative workouts can challenge our muscles in different ways, said Dr Roger Tian, a consultant sports physician at Singapore Sports Medicine Centre and Changi Sports Medicine Centre at Changi General Hospital.

Most people should be able to take part, so long as they start slowly, learn the correct techniques and progress gradually, he said.

Sports psychologist Edgar Tham of SportPsych Consulting said new workouts are a good way to draw new attendees. While the forms of exercise can change, the benefits remain the same, he added.

However, some things, such as working out to

music, are popular in every decade. "The use of music has been found to help people perceive less pain and lengthen exercise duration," said Mr Tham.

"A workout can be changed as long as the key principles of exercise are kept: Frequency, or how often you exercise; intensity, or how hard you work; time or duration of the exercise; and the type of exercise."

Finally, make sure that the venue of exercise is safe and the workout is enjoyable.

"Enjoyment is the key to longevity of any exercise regimen or workout routine," said Mr Tham.

MovNat, Surfset, Piloxing, KpopX Fitness, Masala Bhangra, or freestyle group training? Take your pick.

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MOVNAT: NATURAL MOVEMENTS

If you are keen on MovNat, be prepared for stares, as you could be lifting and carrying logs (above) in a class, or even climbing a tree.

The exercises may seem strange but are designed to be practical and are based on natural human movements.

"MovNat is quite different from traditional exercises. It emphasises mindful, efficient movement skills with a practical purpose," said Mr Gordon Woon, 45, who started the first MovNat class here last July with his wife, Ana.

MovNat, short for Move Naturally, is a physical education and fitness system started by Frenchman Erwan Le Corre in 2008. It is based on 13 fundamental skills – walking, crawling, balancing, running, jumping or vaulting, climbing, lifting, carrying, throwing, catching, aquatics or swimming, and combat moves of striking and grappling.

Mr Woon, who discovered the workout in the United States where he previously worked as a physiotherapist and Feldenkrais (a form of movement therapy) practitioner, said the training enables one to be "quite resilient,

versatile, fit and strong".

"You will rediscover the joy in movement, like what we experienced as children," he said. The skills are taught in a way that is scaled to an individual's ability, and the risk of injury is low as students are also taught to move within their own abilities and limitations.

Still, those who have an existing injury should first be evaluated and treated before embarking on the progressive and complex movement skills, he said.

Now, when IT consultant Loh Wei Li, 28, does weight training, he adds crawling to the routine. "If I'm at a fitness corner, I'll first climb up the vertical pole of the monkey bar – much like climbing a tree – before swinging myself across it," said Mr Loh, who has been doing MovNat for nearly a year.

"Incorporating the new skills into my regular training has made it more fun, albeit a little more embarrassing because of the stares."

Where: Various outdoor locations, including Bukit Batok Nature Park and Palawan Beach in Sentosa
How much: \$30 for a class, or \$100 for a workshop
Visit humannaturallysg.com for details.



KPOPX FITNESS: HIP AND FIT

If you are into Korean pop (K-pop) music, then you are in for a treat.

Ms Maddy Lim (above) has created KpopX Fitness, a moderate- to high-intensity aerobic exercise set to K-pop hits.

She introduced the 50-minute workout at community centres, a year after holding the first class in December 2012. "It is a true-blue Singapore programme. It started with six people

and rapidly expanded to nearly 500 participants, and numbers are still growing," she said.

KpopX Fitness combines simplified K-pop dance moves (the ones you see in music videos) with body-toning aerobics exercises.

Many of the participants are not even into K-pop. "When I first created this, I had imagined it would satisfy only K-pop fans, but it grew and grew," she said.

Unlike in a traditional aerobics class, moves are not repeated over and over, said Ms Lim, who spends most of her time planning the choreography.

"I search for a huge variety of aerobics moves to go with our songs so as to avoid boredom and to minimise repetition."

KpopX Fitness is designed for those in their 20s to 30s, said Ms Lim, 36.

But in response to requests, she recently created KpopX-Lite for those older than 40 and other participants who prefer a lower impact workout. There is also a version for kids and families.

Where: Selected community centres and sports centres, as well as several private gyms and dance studios, including True Fitness, Physical Abuse, Rhapsody and A&J Creative Danceworld
How much: Fees start at \$50 for four sessions
Visit kpopxfitness.com for details.

OTHER FUN WORKOUTS

If you are looking for a quirky and fun workout, try the fairly new trampoline classes at Amped Trampoline Park, an indoor park which opened last August.



Mr Alan Zhang (inset, centre), head coach of Airstraordinary Sports, said he teaches participants to do somersaults and flips.

Gyms and fitness centres are also constantly coming up with new workouts to keep gymgoers interested and entice people to join them.

One of them, Fitness First, will next month launch freestyle group training, a 30-minute

high-intensity workout where participants go through various exercises using their body weight or different equipment such as medicine balls.

In February, gym outfit Virgin Active launched Zumba Step – a fusion of Zumba's low-impact Latin dance moves and step aerobic moves – which is said to be able to help you burn up to 1,000 calories in an hour.

Other relatively new alternative workouts include:

- Crossfit, a high-intensity interval training that incorporates weightlifting, gymnastics bodyweight movements and so on;
- Yogalates, a fusion of yoga and pilates;
- Xtend Barre, a fusion of pilates and ballet moves; and
- Aqua spinning, or underwater cycling.

MASALA BHANGRA: SPICY STEPS

Masala Bhangra, an Indian dance-based workout created by Indian-American fitness instructor Sarina Jain in 1999, combines traditional bhangra folk dance steps with modern Bollywood dance.

The cardiovascular workout reached Singapore in April, when certified trainer Terence Teo conducted the first trial class here.

Now, he is busy conducting free trials, which will be offered until the end of next month, at various sport complexes here for Sport Singapore, previously known as the Singapore Sports Council.

It is claimed that one can burn up to 500 calories in a single session. "You don't have to perfect each move. The important thing is to have fun," said Mr Teo, 46, who is also a Zumba instructor.

Because the workout is new to Singapore, everyone is a beginner. "I teach them how to do some basic moves and then, towards the end of the class, we do the Masala Bhangra jam.

"Everyone will repeat, in sequence, what they



have learnt in the earlier part of the class," he said, adding that the entire class will do all the moves together as they dance through one song.

"It's like dancing at an Indian wedding."

Where: Various sports centres
How much: Fees start at \$86 or \$96 for eight sessions
Visit www.myactivesg.com or www.facebook.com/TNTFSG/events for details.



SURFSET: INDOOR SURFING

One of the world's latest workout crazes, this fitness class done on surfboards, arrived in Singapore early this year when pilates instructor Melissa Goh, 31, started Surfset in Joo Chiat.

During her classes, participants do surfing-inspired moves such as paddling while balancing on a board designed to mimic the movement of a surfboard on water, or pop-ups.

They would, for example, lie flat on their stomachs and push up to a standing position on the board.

A Surfset workout, which lasts 45 minutes, is designed to combine the benefits of cardio training, strength training and balance training in one session, and is said to help you burn up to 1,000 calories each time.

Ms Goh discovered Surfset while researching fitness trends in the United States, where the workout was founded in 2011 by a surfing enthusiast and former professional ice hockey player.

"Because the surfboard is very unstable, your core and stabilising muscles have to work much harder than on a stable surface, giving you a more effective workout in a shorter time," she said.

"It also evens out muscular imbalances. For example, everyone has a stronger leg and a weaker leg. When you do a squat on the board, you have to use both legs evenly or the board will tip to one side."

What she has observed is that the workout appeals a lot to "adventurous types who don't like traditional workouts or going to the gym but still want to get fit".

Pilates instructor Paula Goddard, 42, who first tried the workout about two months ago, said: "It does not just work your core muscles, but also involves cardio as well – it's a challenge."

Where: 454B Joo Chiat Road, Level 3
How much: \$31 to \$35 per class
Visit www.surfset.sg for details.

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PILOXING: FIGHTING FIT

Since this combination of pilates, boxing and dance was started by former professional dancer Viveca Jensen in the United States a few years ago, piloxing has spread worldwide.

There are now 7,000 certified Piloxing instructors in 36 countries. Ms Lucretia Cheng (above), 41, who offered the first Piloxing class here in 2012, is one of three certified instructors in Asia.

She was instantly drawn to the workout, which she first discovered at a fitness convention in the US in 2011, as it offers a cardio workout as well as strength training in one session. "I love that it combines high-intensity cardio (boxing moves) and sculpting moves for the whole body, with some dance segments thrown in for fun, all in just one hour."

Some of the celebrity participants include Hollywood stars such as Hilary Duff and Kirsten Dunst, she added.

Technical executive Nabilah Sumardi, 21, who has done Piloxing for almost a year, said the sessions are "always evolving and changing".

"Whenever the instructor comes in, you don't know what she has up her sleeve."

Where: Selected community centres and sports centres
How much: \$96 for eight sessions at sports centres, and \$70 (non-members) or \$60 (members) for four sessions at community centres.
Visit www.myactivesg.com or www.facebook.com/FitnessFunSG for details.

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