

Just do it!

In the first of her regular columns, new runner **Rhalou Allerhand** reports on the early stages of her progress pounding the pavements



The dreaded 'three-O' crept up on me recently, and forced me to reconsider my fitness regime. Going out dancing every weekend just wasn't keeping the love handles at bay anymore, and I badly needed a body overhaul. But the idea of pounding a treadmill turned me cold.

In the 1940s, my grandmother was the Amateur Athletics Association sprint champion, but despite inheriting her muscular legs, I've never been much of a runner. At 1m 60cm (5' 3"), I gain weight easily, but I've used every excuse in the book not to exercise, including lack of time, money and willpower.

I tried jogging round the block, but with no experience of running and the willpower of a flea, I couldn't do more than 10 minutes without losing steam. Then one day a work colleague suggested I run with her at lunchtime. At first the idea seemed ludicrous. Surely lunchtime was meant to be spent eating?

The concept of sweating around a park instead of relaxing in the pub was horrendous. But my colleague was incredibly supportive, and she looked great from running, so what harm could it do? I decided to give it a go. If nothing else, it was a good opportunity to catch up on some office gossip.

At first it was hard work. We only managed 15 minutes before I was ready

to collapse, and going back to the office red-faced and sweaty with no shower facilities was hard. But thanks to a persuasive friend and an overwhelming desire to ditch the flab, I persevered. In central London you're never far away from a picturesque patch of green, so every other day we ran around the park and, although I was far from fit and needed frequent embarrassing rests, before long I managed to build up my running strength.

I'm the last person in the world you'd expect to enjoy running, but having a friend to support me really helped. I'm still not as fast as my granny, but every day it gets a little easier. Urged on by my tightening thighs and a burgeoning addiction to the adrenalin rush I get once I've completed a circuit, I've stuck at it, and I'm definitely starting to reap the rewards.

The great thing about running is it really doesn't take long to see results. Not only is it free, you can always find time to run. Jogging during my lunch hour makes no difference to my free time whatsoever, and definitely improves my mood in the afternoon.

My next challenge is learning to run solo in the evenings; I'll let you know how I get on! ■



'It doesn't take very long to see results'



EAT WELL

Nutritional therapist Julie Silver (www.juliesilver.co.uk) suggests the following mid-morning snacks for energy:

- Oatcakes, or a wheat-free bread, spread with either avocado, hummus, nut or seed butters. Make sure the butters don't contain palm oil, a saturated-fat.
- Nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts and walnuts, and sunflower or hemp.
- Raw vegetables such as carrot sticks, cucumber, sugar snap peas.
- Fruit, or dried fruit, free from sulphur dioxide.
- A cereal or protein bar, free from sugar and artificial sweeteners.



PREPARING FOR A LUNCHTIME RUN

If you're a first-time runner and want to fit a lunchtime run into your daily routine, time management is key. Wellness trainer Rachel Holmes (www.rachelholmes.com) shows you how to maximise your time.

- It isn't a good idea to stretch cold muscles, as this can decrease muscle strength and lead to injury. It's a much better idea to do a milder form of exercise for your warm-up, so start your run with a two- to five-minute brisk walk.
- Start out walking and jogging at two-minute intervals, then slowly increase the intervals until you can jog for 20 minutes.
- Cool down with another brisk walk. Then, stretch out your calves, hamstrings, quadriceps, inner thighs and lower back. Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds to achieve the maximum benefit.



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