



Some people have never set foot in a gym in their lives and would wince at the mere thought of getting on a cross-trainer. I don't fall into that category; I've been going to the gym since I was a teenager, and at one time got caught up in a high-energy whirlwind of boxercise, aerobics, spin cycling and running.

However, just as I was getting into my stride, so to speak, I was struck down with a painful knee condition (Femoral Patella Syndrome) making it painful to walk down stairs, and even to get out of my car. So running was most definitely out and my exercise extravaganza got shelved while I had physiotherapy. My gym visits became much more sedate, and I moved in with my boyfriend (a fellow 'foodie', who shares my love of cooking), so the weight slowly crept on.

After several false starts on healthy eating plans, I decided I needed to enlist the help of a personal trainer. My brother, an exercise fanatic, had scared me with tales of his no-nonsense Geordie trainer who'd bark orders 'army major' style at him. So, it was with a certain amount of trepidation I drove to Waterbeach to meet my new personal trainer Amber Bryan, of lovefit training.

But she opened the door with a beaming smile and didn't make me 'drop and do 10' every time I said the word chocolate! Our first session was a consultation about my goals, what

type of exercise I liked, and my diet (...cue confessions about my latte habit and alcohol consumption).

Amber was bubbly and encouraging, explaining that her philosophy was about making exercise fun, and I have to admit it felt quite exciting to know that my body was now in the hands of an expert.

Next day, an email pinged into my inbox with a training plan and some suggested dietary changes. As I opened the email, my stomach let out a rumble as I imagined a diet heavy on lettuce and light on carbs, but only small changes were advised.

Amber suggested swapping my sugary fruit and fibre cereal for porridge, knocking the morning latte habit on the head, and cutting my caffeine intake by half, interspersing herbal teas with normal tea.

She also suggested eating a carb-fuelled lunch of jacket potato with beans or tuna on days I was exercising, but generally to stick to the same evening meals as before, such as tuna nicoise salad or noodle-based dishes, but she did say that I needed to cut my portion size by about 20 per cent.

The most difficult change was her suggestion to cut alcohol out midweek, and keep my intake down to two glasses of wine a night at the weekend.

But I was happy to give it a go...

## week 1

Day one didn't get off to a good start as my porridge exploded in the microwave but once I'd coaxed it back into a bowl it tasted lovely, and filled me up. The lemon and ginger tea was quite zingy and uplifting too. It pained me to run past the coffee kart at work – my café latte mecca of a morning – but I settled for a tea at my desk.

My first session with Amber saw her test my blood pressure, take my hip and waist measurements and put me through my paces in her gym. I certainly worked up a sweat on the bike as she kept racking up the resistance, then threw in a couple of 20 and 30 second sprints. Next came a variety of circuit-style exercises including box press-ups (the girl-friendly ones), abdominal crunches, lunges and squats. I left the session red-faced but invigorated – and with a training plan to hit the gym two more times that week and do a 40-minute jog at the weekend.

I found the gym workouts fine and whereas before my session would involve 20 minutes on the cross-trainer, a bit of stretching and then stopping, this was a targeted plan. So after 15 minutes of cross-training, 15 minutes of weights, 15 minutes bike (with four 30 second sprints) and 15 minutes of walking on a gradient later, my T-shirt was drenched in sweat and I was well and truly worked out! My second session that week was more circuit-based, incorporating press-ups, lunges, squats and calf raises, adding variety and working different parts of my body.

Week one posed various challenges; the caffeine withdrawal left me with headaches and feeling shivery, but as the week went on I developed a taste for fennel and liquorice tea, and cut down my tea addiction from about seven cups a day to two. I also faced temptation at a tea party, where every conceivable cake was laid out before me; you could almost see my halo shining as I sat drinking rose petal tea and eating strawberries. I also managed to get through a night out with the girls, quaffing just one glass of vino, and a garden party the next night, when I shunned alcohol completely. Anyway the results were in, and my hard work paid off as I lost a staggering 5lbs in the first week.

# body beautiful

Self-confessed gym slacker Louise Cummings hires a personal trainer to kick-start her fitness routine and get into shape...

Picture by Warren Gunn