

Getting fit is gift that will last all year long

CHRISTMAS is a very busy time for everyone and with all the extra shopping, catering and partying, you need to be fit to cope.

In fact, probably the best gift you can give yourself – or anyone you know well enough for your gift not to be misunderstood – is access to a keep fit class or health club.

Joining a health club or gym is a popular pursuit. Membership conditions vary from club to club. You may have to join annually or just month by month. Generally speaking, membership entitles you to use all the facilities and in many, you will have access to guidance from trained staff as well.

An assessment and personal programme of exercise is often provided by a supervised club. You may even be given dietary advice. It is wise, however, to see your doctor before you join, just to make sure you are fit to follow a strenuous programme of exercise and/or weight control.

Keep fit classes are often less formally structured. They are held in community halls, social clubs, school and church halls and the gymnasias of colleges of further education. The cost of joining is usually rather less than that for a health club, but you will only be offered one style of exercise. It may be some form of aerobics such as step, 'mat' work gymnastics, modern dance, PT of the type you did at school, or combination keep fit. You will work under the guidance of an instructor or leader who should assess you when you join to ensure you do not attempt to do too much too soon. This is very important if you haven't been involved

in exercising before, or for a number of years. Again, getting your GP's advice before you commit yourself is essential.

Once you begin to take regular exercise you will start to feel and see the benefits. You will have more energy. You will feel better. Your posture will improve and, because your muscles are becoming toned, you will begin to look slimmer, even though you may not have lost any weight.

A rather more elegant way to gain fitness is to go to a health farm. These are residential institutions where a programme of exercises and a variety of skin, body and slimming treatments and massage are devised for each guest. Guests stay for a weekend, a week, or more, and the programmes are planned to produce some visible benefit at the end. These are very much more expensive, of course, but they can produce reasonably fast results.

Membership of a health club makes an excellent gift for a close friend or relative. Membership of a keep fit class is a good gift for you to give yourself. A visit to a health farm is a very special gift, and probably the best way of pampering yourself imaginable. And at the end, not only you but also your family will benefit from the improvement you'll note in yourself.

Fitness is essential to being able to cope with the rigours of Christmas, especially if you've a family and a job to hold down. Best of all, however, once you are on that road to fitness, you'll reap the benefits all winter and on to your next summer holidays.



Make sure you are the belle of the ball

WHEN you're tired you tend to let yourself go. The same can apply when you're busy. Marry the two and you have the perfect recipe for turning yourself into a wreck.

Christmas is a time when this is a very real danger with all the preparations, extra shopping, visiting friends and partying. Add a lively family and a challenging job and really you stand little chance of turning yourself into the belle of the ball.

What happens is a slow, downhill deterioration. You start to let little things go in favour of the other things you have to do until you know you look a wreck because you feel like one. What you need is a session at your beauty salon.

This may seem a touch extreme, but if you've let yourself go for a while, you will need the help of experts to make your body beautiful again. You need to know you are

looking good before you can feel good. You'll need to know what professional help costs, but the beauty therapist will make an assessment and tell you.

There are so many treatments you can have, including steam treatments for your face, the removal of unwanted hair on any part of your body, whole body massage, skin exfoliation, a manicure or pedicure. As well as treatments, beauty therapists

can recommend special preparations designed to correct faults in your skin, especially those on the face.

Men, too, recognise the need to be well groomed. Many beauty salons have a male department and massage is as beneficial to men as it is to women.

This Christmas, if they ask what you want as a gift, a session or two in the beauty salon could be the perfect answer.

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