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QUESTION FOR  
OUR URBAN DOC?



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look good, feel good

## Fighting fit in the boxing ring



TRAINING | Working up a sweat at the Jubilee Hall Club



PREPARATION | Boxing teacher Graham Boylan straps up Maxine

MAXINE CLAYMAN  
for thelondonpaper

"YOU ready to fight then?" asks Graham Boylan, our boxing instructor, as he bandages my hands in wraps – a precaution I'm told will protect my wrists.

As a peace-loving vegetarian who has never hit anyone, I'm dubious. Nervously eyeing up Graham's bulging tattooed biceps, I notice that his bloodied knuckles look as if they could easily gouge a chunk out of someone.

But the personal trainer and Amateur Boxing Association non-contact tutor reassures me that the boxing classes he set up three months ago are designed for people who want to improve their fitness and co-ordination levels. There's

no hitting in the face, so there's no chance of me ending up out cold with two black eyes, which somewhat allays my fears.

And, as the gym fills up, I'm relieved to see the group mainly consists of young professionals, half of whom are women (and we're not talking butch bodybuilder types), which makes me feel less intimidated.

PR executive Leila Dastyar, 27, from Finchley, attends the class with colleagues. She says they get amusing comments from people for enjoying a sport normally associated with burly blokes.

"When we tell people what we do every week, we always get the same comment: 'You must mean boxercise not boxing.' But we love it – it's the best workout ever." While

everyone else warms up with some skipping or jabbing the punch bags, the gloves go on and I'm taken to one side with another new kid on the block, a cute 25-year-old called Callum.

Together we're put through our paces to see what kind of fighters we are. Callum, it turns out, is

orthodox, so leads with his left hand. I'm a southpaw, and a bit of a rookie given that I'm right-handed.

After learning the basic stance, we're shown how to throw a jab and – more importantly for me – how to defend ourselves by punching into Graham's hand. The key is never to drop your

guard and keep your hands up at all times. Then we join the rest of the group in a series of exercises, alternating between hitting punch bags and jumping over steps.

Having already worked up a sweat, we start sparring and tagging. We're paired with someone of the same sex and level to practise

some moves. Previously I'd questioned the categorising of boxing as a sport, but as the hour progresses I surprise myself at how competitive I become as I try to outmanoeuvre my partner.

As we do laps round the gym and play games to cool down, I feel like I've regressed to primary school. But it's all

part of the fun and I'm amazed at just how much I've enjoyed the session. It turns out there's more to boxing than testosterone, and I'll definitely be back for more.

**Boxing classes are held on Tuesdays from 6.15 to 7.15pm at The Gym, 30 The Piazza, Covent Garden, £10**

everyone's talking about

### Does work stress cause breast cancer?



**Why is it in the news?**

A study published this week found a link between work stress and breast cancer.

**What do we know?**

The 36,000-strong study looked at the medical histories of women aged 30 to 50 in full or part-time work in 1991. The women were asked to measure stress levels, with questions on job demands, decision-making authority and social support. By 2004, they found 767 study participants had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Women whose jobs carried high demands and women with little decision-making authority were, on average, 30 per cent more likely to have developed breast cancer. Those who had demanding jobs and little control over decisions were 40 per cent more likely to develop the disease.

**Why is it controversial?**

Some doctors are sceptical because "stress" itself is a highly subjective condition and this study contradicts earlier findings, including one published recently by Danish researchers.

**What does it mean for me?**

It is unlikely to be stress itself that increases the risk of cancer. It may be a tendency to deal with the condition by drinking more, smoking or taking less exercise.

**So what should I do?**

Age, family history, weight and oestrogen levels are the strongest risk factors for breast cancer. If you are in a high-risk category, you should regularly check yourself for lumps or discuss having a mammogram with your GP.

PAUL McCANN

## NEED TO LOSE FAT

**Q** I'm 160cm tall and weigh 100kg. I've tried to lose weight, but nothing works. Should I talk to my doctor about weight-loss surgery?

**A** Absolutely. You could certainly benefit from a more structured weight-loss programme. This might include going under the knife, but surgery is a last resort so your GP will discuss why it is that your weight-loss efforts have failed.

You are morbidly obese by British standards and, if you remain dangerously overweight, your GP should refer you to an obesity clinic to consider surgery. The more obese you are, the more beneficial surgery becomes as the

urban doc

DR ANJLEE SHETH



risks of obesity begin to outweigh the risks of surgery.

It involves reducing the stomach size without any cutting, and these days most operations are done by keyhole or minimally invasive surgery.

Overeating might dislodge the band and defeat the purpose, so surgery is successful in people who are motivated to lead a healthy lifestyle forever. Surgeons will only operate if you've been

grossly overweight for a few years. Certain diseases, such as severe stomach ulcers or bronchitis, and addictions to alcohol or drugs may also rule you out.

The National Obesity Forum can tell you more online at nationalobesityforum.org.uk. **ANJLEE SHETH IS A GP WORKING IN LONDON**

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