

Michael Mosley “The Truth About Getting Fit”

Repeated on BBC4 on 7 January 2019

The programme was aimed at people who want to get fit but don't like conventional gym, can't find the time or lack motivation.

Fitness tests

Mosley suggested two home fitness tests needing no equipment.

1. Sitting test

You sit on a hard dining chair with arms crossed in front of you. You measure the time it takes to stand up and sit down ten times. Up and down counts as one.

Age (years)	Men (ideal max time)	Women (ideal max time)
Up to 35	10	12
36 to 55	13	15
55+	18	19

2 Step test

Step up and down onto a step for three minutes. The step should be about the height of one on a staircase. Get the rhythm by saying 'Up Up Down Down'. Then test your heart rate

Age (years)	Men (ideal max time)	Women (ideal max time)
Up to 35	105	110
36 to 55	110	115
55+	115	120

Exercises

1 “Active 10”

Three times ten minutes of brisk walking. You are able to talk but not sing. It proves better than ten thousand steps.

2 High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)

Two lots of twenty seconds of very hard cycling on a turbo or bike trainer, three times a week. Need a warm up and cool down as well. Each session is equivalent to a 45 minute run. It takes the glycogen (sugars) from the muscles.

3 Living room HIIT without a bike

This involves 'star jumps' (fast as possible jumping and extending arms and legs to form a cross), squats and static sprinting (on-the-spot hard jogging). The routine is as follows:

Sixty seconds	Star jumps
Sixty seconds	Squats
Sixty seconds	Static sprinting
Sixty seconds	Squats
Sixty seconds	Star jumps

4 Weight training

Muscles can be developed either by heavy weights or longer periods of lighter weights. In both cases exercise twice a week to exhaustion.

Motivation

Will-power is fragile and reduces over time and with distractions. If you don't enjoy an exercise you won't persist, so do something different. It also helps if you do the exercise with other people.

Runner's 'high'

This was thought to be due to the release of endorphins. It now appears to be from 'endocannabinoids'. These are produced naturally in our bodies during exercise and give an effect gentler but similar to cannabis.

Damage to joints

Running does not appear to damage knee cartilage. The forces produced are higher but only happen for short times compared with walking. It might be that running and walking action keeps the cartilage in good condition by stimulating blood flow. Runners have lower rates of arthritis.

Brain health

Dancing is especially good for brain health, especially formal ballroom or latin. As well as increasing blood flow it also requires the brain to work for co-ordinating movement.