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Gadgets give boost to fitness routine

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Chances are, you know a yo-yo dieter. You may even be one, perpetually starting a new diet and exercise routine only to fall helplessly off the fitness wagon and into the feeding trough.

Lifestyle Family Fitness trainers think they have a few high-tech answers that will help keep yo-yo dieters up to the task and on the right track to weight-loss success.

When a diet begins, it's important for the dieter to know his routine is working, even if the pounds aren't falling off in clumps. "To adhere to an exercise regimen, there has to be motivation," said Kevin LaFerriere, Lifestyle's Fitness Services vice president. "People want to know they're getting closer to their goals. It gets them excited."

That's where Lifestyle's newest devices come into the picture. Lifestyle trainers believe the Visual Fitness Planner, Bodygem and Bodybugg are the pieces that will help complete the fitness puzzle for clients who need an extra boost of confidence.

The process begins with Visual Fitness Planner, software that evaluates the current fitness of each new Lifestyle client and gives a projected point of fitness that's attainable if the client stays the course.

Ervin Zubic, a Lifestyle district manager, said the software is a prime motivator for new clients and can help predict a person's risk for heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

"New members are apprehensive and this program helps get them started down the right path," Zubic said. "It gives you the ability to see a visual difference."

Certain measurements are taken and a three-dimensional image of the person is created. The software then computes what the client's body will look like in time if he maintains a recommended diet and fitness schedule. The program is free with a membership to Lifestyle Family Fitness.

New clients also have the option of buying the Bodygem, which measures the body's resting metabolic rate. A subject breathes through his mouth into the device for several minutes. The Bodygem then processes the person's metabolism and its ability to process calories.

"Everyone has a metabolic fingerprint, and this gives you that identity," Zubic said. "It's a great starting point for goal management."

Zubic said a second Bodygem reading is taken about six weeks after the first. If a person's metabolic rate increases, then the fitness regimen is likely working.

"The Bodygem shows people that the (fitness) program is working for them," LaFerriere said. "These advances allow people to find out how unique they are and to see their metabolic fingerprint."

The Bodygem is available for \$35.

The last device is the Bodybugg, which attaches to the arm and tracks all burned calories throughout the day. The Bodybugg measures skin temperature, motion, changes in the skin's ability to conduct electricity and heat flux.

Users can download the Bodybugg's daily information into a computer and log onto apexfitness.com. The Apex Fitness Web site calculates how many calories have been burned, and lets the user know how many more must be burned that day in order to maintain weight loss.

Users can also design a training regimen and nutritional routine that will optimize weight loss over a period of time.

"A diet has a beginning and an end," Zubic said. "This is a way to modify your lifestyle altogether."

Colby Mann, a personal trainer at the Lifestyle Family Fitness center in Creekwood Crossing, showed us his Bodybugg's reading on Feb. 8. That day, he burned 4,321 calories and consumed 1,887, giving him a net loss of 2,434 calories.

"I was a little undereating that day," Mann said. "But this tells you what kind of deficit you need to attain, depending on the goal you set."

Mann said food labels often are incorrect or people simply miscalculate how many calories they have consumed during the day. The Bodybugg and Apex system takes the guesswork out of the equation.

"It's a system of checks and balances," LaFerriere said. "People are really keen to know exactly how many calories they've burned. They love to have that reassurance."

The Apex program is \$499 with the Bodybugg and \$359 without it.

Lifestyle Family Fitness will roll out the Visual Fitness Planner, Bodygem and Bodybugg at locations throughout Florida by the end of April. The products already are available in all three Bradenton Lifestyle Family Fitness centers.

"When you can actually see and measure what happens to your body, it increases your compliance," Zubic said. "Your chance to really make a permanent change triples."

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MANATEE

PICKLE BALL

The Anna Maria Island Community Center, 407 Magnolia Ave. in Anna Maria, will host a demonstration of pickle ball from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on March 13. Pickle ball is a combination of ping pong, tennis and badminton, and has expanded from a family activity to a paddle court sport with rules. Information: 778-1908.

FACTOIDS

352 - Average daily intake of milk, in grams, by a group of more than 1,100 white girls aged 9 and 10 in 1987

241 - Milk intake by the same girls 10 years later

135 - Intake of sweetened, carbonated soft drinks by these girls at ages 9 and 10

377 - Soda intake 10 years later

Source: A study, published in February's Journal of Pediatrics. Reported in The Washington Post