

Fitness Advice from Personal Trainer Jacqueline Carter

by Kat Avila

In [January](#), fitness professional Jacqueline Carter shared her expertise with JADE Magazine's readers on how to get in shape for the new year and how to maintain good health. She has been certified since 1987 and works as a senior personal trainer at a gym, as well as a master trainer and continuing education provider for Resist-A-Ball®. I revisited Jacqueline to ask her about current fitness trends and other matters of interest.

What classes are you teaching these days?

I teach stability ball classes, balance classes, and functional fitness training.

What are the current exercise trends?

Functional training is one of the most popular trends. This type of training is geared towards enhancing one's performance during activities of daily living. The type of activity is dependent upon the lifestyle of the participant.

The exercises can be geared toward a variety of functions, such as improved core stability to prevent back pain, improved balance for sports performance, or improved ability to perform movements specific to one's job or the types of tasks one does throughout the day.

Functional training might include movements such as squatting, lunging, pushing, or pulling, and typically emphasizes whole body movements. Shorter workouts are popular, and many clubs now offer "express" workouts that are frequently done in a circuit format. For example, Curves® has had incredible success with its version of a 30-minute circuit workout.

There has also been a huge push for exercise programs for specific populations, such as children, teens, women, and older adults, deconditioned and obese individuals.

In addition, programming for individuals with medical conditions is on the rise. "Post-rehab" is a term used in the fitness industry that refers to exercise programs that help to transition people out of physical therapy and help one to continue exercising safely. "Prehab" is another term that refers to programs with the objective of being in good condition prior to going through a medical procedure, such as a surgery.

Pilates and yoga have been popular for quite awhile and have continued to be of interest.

Are there any exercises a woman can do to reduce menstrual cramps?

That's a good question. I've never heard of anything specific.

To strengthen the lower back, what are some exercises you recommend?

Two good exercises are the bridge and the side bridge. Both of these exercises contribute to spinal stability and will train the deep inner muscles of the trunk, a.k.a. the core.



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To do the bridge, lie on your back with your feet shoulder-width apart. Place your arms on the floor and keep them straight. Tighten your abdominal muscles in the same manner that you would if you were putting on a tight pair of jeans, but not to the point where the position of the spine changes. Lift the hips up off the floor while maintaining a neutral position of the spine. Lower the hips back to the floor. When the exercise gets easy, you can progress to an advanced version by lifting one foot off the floor. Avoid swinging the uninvolved leg as you lift during the advanced version.

To do the side bridge, lie sideways on the floor and prop yourself up onto the forearm closest to the ground. Extend your legs and place the top foot in front of the bottom foot for support. Lift your body up off the floor supporting your weight on the forearm and the feet. Be sure to maintain a neutral position of the spine during the exercise in the same manner described for the bridging exercise. An easier version of this exercise can be done by starting with the legs stacked on top of one another and bending the knees.



As your women clients grow older, how are their exercise programs affected?

I am a firm believer in prevention, and I think that we can significantly enhance our physical fitness during our later years by developing and maintaining a well-rounded program when we are young women. Developing good habits early on helps to decrease the risk of health problems and increases the likelihood that a high level of functioning can be achieved during the later years.

A well-rounded exercise program includes what are referred to as the health-related components of physical fitness. These include cardiorespiratory exercise (i.e., biking, running, swimming, walking, etc.), muscular strength and endurance (accomplished by weight lifting and callisthenic-type exercises), and stretching for flexibility.

In addition to these, I think it is wise to include training for both balance and core stability. Each of the components I've mentioned will decrease the risk of the onset of health problems that we typically see in older adults, like heart disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, back and neck problems, frailty, etc. It also decreases the change of losing mobility and/or independence.

Lastly, it is important to develop good movement patterns by performing your exercises with good form and posture. This helps to prevent muscle imbalances and excess wear and tear on the joints. Remember that it is always a good investment to seek the advice of a fitness professional who can help map out a program that is specific to one's health status and exercise history. A professional can also teach the correct mechanics of exercising.

NOTE: Many thanks to Jeff Dresser and Joe Hendrix for contributing the photos (©2000).

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