

How FIT are you?

Put your health to the TEST. NO Bleeps required!

BY RACHEL BROWN

Out of breath after running for the bus? Suffering from high strain after a heavy session on the dance floor? Uh oh, your out-of-shape self needs to take a fitness test. Cue bleep-test flashbacks from PE... fear, shame, the class fitty laughing at you as you stagger between traffic cones. Don't panic, though, we're not forcing you back to your schooldays.

"With simple checks and easy daily exercises, anyone can improve their fitness," says personal trainer Ramona Braganza, who's toned up Jessica Alba and Scarlett Johansson. "You don't need a lot of fancy equipment to get in shape, I often take my clients outdoors for their workouts using whatever's in their garden or driveway."

Take Ramona's tests to identify your fitness fails, then kick them into shape.

Walking UP STAIRS
for SIX MINUTES a day can

lower cholesterol by 15 per cent*

1 BEND AND EXTEND

Flexibility

Suppleness declines as we get older, and sitting down all day can shorten our hip flexors (the muscles that help us Mo-o-o-o-ve Like Jagger) and tighten hamstrings.

THE TEST Sit with your legs straight out in front of you. Reach your hands forward as far as possible, holding the position for two seconds. Now look at the distance between your fingertips and your toes. Which (honestly) applies to you?

- "Fingertips reach past my toes" **Good**
- "Fingertips are less than 6cm from my toes" **Average**
- "Fingertips are over 7cm from my toes" **Poor**

POOR? You can improve your flexibility with regular stretching. Do the flexibility test daily for five minutes in front of the telly if you like, holding each stretch for five seconds, with a rest of five seconds in between. You'll notice the difference in a month.

AVERAGE? Yoga can help ease you into stretching. Find a class near you at Localyogaclasses.co.uk.

GOOD? Big up your bendiness by moving on to the tougher, more technical Pilates workout. Try *Pilates On The Go* by Pippa Middleton's teacher Margot Campbell (£16.99, Amazon.co.uk).

Is your resting heart rate 55-60 BPM?

CONGRATS, you're as FIT as an ATHLETE!

2 STEP IT UP

Cardiovascular endurance

"If you can't go up two flights of stairs without feeling puffed, you need to work on your cardiovascular stamina ASAP," says Ramona.

THE TEST Take your resting pulse at the wrist, counting the beats per minute (BPM). The average BPM for a woman is 60-100. Step up and down a stair for three minutes and take your BPM again. Now calculate the difference between this and your resting heart rate (RHR).

- 29 or fewer BPM above RHR **Good**
- 30-49 BPM above RHR **Average**
- 50 BPM or more above RHR **Poor**

POOR? Skip the bus, swap lifts for the stairs, and run around after the kids (only if you have them – chasing random children is frowned upon). Aim for 10,000 steps a day, keeping count with a pedometer (£2.99, Argos).

AVERAGE? Up your game by fitting an exercise class into your schedule. Pure Gym (Puregym.com) clubs open 24 hours a day, so there's no excuse.

GOOD? Mix things up with iWorkout Pro (69p, iTunes). It provides new daily workouts to keep you on your toes.

3 ABS-OLUTELY FABULOUS

Core strength

"A strong core is crucial for good posture," says Ramona. "Not to mention for looking half decent in a bikini." Gulp.

THE TEST Do an elbow plank (lie on the floor and use your forearms and feet to raise the rest of your body off the floor). How long can you hold the pose?

- More than 60 seconds **Good**
- 30-60 seconds **Average**
- Less than 30 seconds **Poor**

POOR? Suck your stomach in. Feel your muscles tense? Good. Hold for a count of three, release and repeat five times. Do this at any opportunity. It only takes a week to feel the difference.

AVERAGE? Tone up with the BarbiSize Your Tummy 2 app (69p, iTunes). It's a personal trainer, minus the price tag!

GOOD? Be a hula girl and work a hoop for 20 minutes, three times a week. This retro workout is ace for core muscles.

4 OB-ARM-A-RAMA

Upper body strength

"A lot of people don't work on this area and so injure themselves when they lug around heavy suitcases or shopping," says Ramona.

THE TEST You know the drill. Drop and give us 20... Well, try. Press-ups on your knees are totally allowed for ladies. How many can you do before you crumble?

- 20+ **Good**
- 9-20 **Average**
- 0-8 **Poor**

POOR? Start doing two press-ups on your knees, working your way up to 10 by the end of each session.

AVERAGE? Keep at it. Do 10 press-ups every day for a week. Then the next week try 15 daily. After that take on 20. And remember, quality is better than quantity.

GOOD? Try doing press-ups on your toes while wearing a rucksack filled with two 1.5-litre bottles of water.

5 REAR OF THE YEAR

Lower body strength

One word. Beyoncé. You don't get thighs like those without some hard work. "Squats are the way to a better behind and healthier future," says Ramona.

THE TEST Stand in front of a chair with your hands on your hips. Sit down until you nearly touch the seat then stand up again. How many can you do before you're cream-cracked?

- 30+ **Good**
- 20-29 **Average**
- 19 or fewer **Poor**

POOR? Every time you get up from and sit down on a chair, you're (kind of) doing a squat. So instead of sending an email, walk over and talk to your colleague face to face. It all adds up.

AVERAGE? Work your way up until you can do 30+ in a row. **GOOD?** Learn B's *Single Ladies* dance. YouTube it. **f**