

Of wild squats, scowls and other funny faces

Staying Slim Is Hard, But It Doesn't Have To Be Boring

Mansi Choksi | TNN

When that pale roll of fat wobbles over your skin-tight jeans, it's time to pretend that the dry, low-fat brownie will magically become a triple chocolate mousse in your mouth. It's also time to hit the gym every yawny morning and sweat it out like you were born to do just that. Cut to a few months later, when your belly is back to being a washboard. Hold that triple mousse—the battle of the bulge is far from over.

Losing weight may be hard, but as thousands have discovered, staying trim is much harder. It requires not just physical exercise but mental stamina not to succumb to sundae brunches. Naturally, the businessmen have marched in with a bunch of wacky workout classes to help keep people fashionably thin.

These new alternatives may not get the

same results as cardio-vascular workouts at regular gyms, but they definitely win in the novelty stakes. Whether it is African dance aerobics (the flavour of the season), yogapilates (yoga and pilates mixed to tone abs), face gym (facial exercise to tone those cheeks), Bollywood dancing (aerobics to Bollywood tunes), abridged versions of kickboxing and Tai chi (sold as one of the best calories burners) and most uniquely, table toning (designed for the lazies), there's no dearth of variety. Those who prefer to work out at home don't have to decode Jane Fonda's accent any more. Shilpa Shetty and Bipasha Basu are now taking yoga and aerobics on fitness DVDs.

Sonal Toprani's African dance aerobics held at Gold's Gym has housewives and professionals exploring their rhythmic side to the sound of drums. They roll up in track-pants, loose T-shirts and multicoloured scarves wrapped around their waists. Their

eyes are swollen with sleep, which is shaken out soon enough as the tempo builds and the group goes African with jiggling shoulders, lots of thumping and wild leg squats. Toprani hollers them on. "These students are always ready to dance," smiles the trainer whose neon orange top and tinselly scarf reflect her mood. "We live a very structured life, so this is a great way to let your hair down and just have fun burning calories."

Matunga's Figures and Shapers is custom-designed for the lethargic. Romantic tracks from Yash Chopra's flicks play on the sound system in a room full of 'tables' and 'chairs' which do the real work. Jamin, 25, lies comfortably on a tummy-toner table that obligingly lifts her legs and stretches her ab muscles. "There's no sweating here and no fatigue," she says, smugly patting her tum. "I've already lost more than two kilos in two months."

In the room, other older ladies, main-



DANCING FOR FITNESS: Sonal Toprani's (in black tracks) African dance aerobics held at Gold's Gym has housewives and professionals exploring their rhythmic side to the sound of drums

ly housewives, rock from side to side as toning tables and chairs, aptly called hip trimmers, waist trimmers and thigh trimmers, get to work. Salvius Williams, who manages the Matunga branch, says because there is no exertion, people feel fresher after the workout. "It's a proven system for inch loss, it stimulates circulatory systems, relieves stress, improves posture and in all just makes you feel great," he says.

One of the most public and dreaded places to put on weight is the face. Enter Asha Bacchani's Facegym where students pout, wink and stretch their faces in a

nondescript room in Khar. Making funny faces is serious business here and is touted as nature's answer to Botox. "Everyone focuses on body muscles but the face has 52 muscles which need rejuvenation," says Bacchani, who was trained in the UK where facial yoga is a rage. "It tightens skin, eliminates wrinkles, improves blood circulation and makes the face glow." Skeptics say there isn't too much scientific proof to back any of these methods, but for many Mumbaikars it's about killing two birds with one stone—bulges and boredom.