

Top 10 Health and Fitness Trends of the '00-'10 Decade

Every decade has its share of health and fitness trends and the last 10 years brought some doozies. We renewed our relationship with carbs, invented a whole new way of exercise using our Wiis, rediscovered our abs and gave them a new name (the core) and created tons of great technology that makes it easier than ever to exercise. Check out this past decade's top health and fitness trends - the good, the bad and the ugly.

1. Low Carb Diets

Carbs took a beating in the '90s with the resurgence of the Atkin's diet, which focused on high protein, high fat, and low carbs to induce rapid weight loss. In the early 00s, carbs came back into the spotlight with a host of new diets, such as The South Beach Diet and Protein Power, but with a more forgiving approach to eating carbs.

The last few years have gone even better for the much maligned carbohydrate as we realized that carbs were not the enemy. This was the decade we realized that carbs could actually be good (e.g., whole grains, fruits or vegetables) and bad (e.g., refined sugars). The high protein craze, though extreme at times, did have an upside: We're now more aware of how food fuels our bodies and the importance of balance.

2. Exergaming

We've always loved our video games, but this was the decade we realized that we could play games and get fit at the same time - or at least get off the couch a little more. The introduction of the Nintendo Wii changed how we play games and even how we exercise. The interactivity of the controllers and the ability to track body movement gave us a whole new way to move and a host of fitness games like Wii Fit, Wii Fit Plus, EA Sports Active and EA Sports Active: More Workouts.

Celebrities also jumped on the Wii train with Daisy Fuentes Pilates and Jillian Michael's Fitness Ultimatum 2010, both of which failed to thrill.

Who could predict that we would be balancing on virtual tightropes or juggling imaginary balls for exercise?

3. New Health and Exercise Technology

The Internet changed our lives back when Al Gore invented it, and the past 10 years has given us new technology to do everything from counting our steps to directing our workouts straight from our smartphones. Some of the best include:

- **Fitness Apps** - With apps like iPump and iFitness we now have no excuse not to exercise.
- **GPS Tracking Gear** - Heart rate monitors are so 90s. The latest GPS devices can count your calories, map your location, track your stats and make you breakfast.
- **Body Monitoring Devices** - The popularity of pedometers surged in the past few years and we've seen even more devices such as the Philips Activity Monitor and the BioTrainer to track everything from sleep patterns to physical activity levels.

4. Dancing Away the Pounds

The popularity of dancing for exercise comes and goes (remember the line dancing craze in the 90s?) and this decade we caught the bug once again. Spurred by the surprising popularity of Dancing With the Stars and our desire to make exercise less like work and more like fun, a wealth of new workouts and classes popped up this decade to help us dance away the pounds. Some of the stand outs include:

- **Cardio Striptease** - Striptease went mainstream this decade, prompting numerous women to ask one another, "Are you going to pole dancing class tonight?"
- **Zumba** - This fun Latin-based dance class came out early in the decade and has gotten even more popular with a mix of dance styles including salsa, samba and merengue.

5. The Rise of the Amateur Athlete

In the last 10 years, one of the more interesting trends has been the rise of the amateur athlete, particularly beginning marathoners. Statistics tell us that around 299,000 runners finished marathons back in 2000 and almost twice as many (407,000) finished in 2007. Not everyone is thrilled with the trend, but runners all over the world are taking advantage of some of the resources we've created in the past decade to make it easier:

- Online Marathon Training Programs mean we don't need coaches or running clubs to train.
- Finding marathons is easier than ever and there are new ones popping up every year.
- Marathon training has evolved into shorter training runs, which means you don't have to quit your job to run a marathon.

6. Exercise Gimmicks and Gadgets - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Exercise gadgets have long been a part of American culture and this decade saw its fair share of shiny new gear and gimmicks - some good and some that defy explanation.

The Good

We saw plenty of new tools for balance, stability, power and core training including:

- Kettlebell Training
- Balance training gear like the BOSU Balance Trainer, the BOSU Ballast Ball
- TRX Suspension Training

The Bad

There was no shortage of ab equipment on late night infomercials promising everything from a treadmill-like experience for your abs to melting the fat from your waistline:

- The Ab Rocket
- The Ab Circle Pro
- Ab Scissor

The ugly

Some of the more unusual offerings of the past decade include

- 3 Minute Legs
- The Shake Weight
- The Rock and Go

7. The Rise of the Anti-Shoe

Another interesting trend in the past decade are anti-shoes, or shoes with Masai Barefoot Technology (BMT). These types of shoes are designed to mimic walking in the sand. The sole is curved and has multiple layers, making it feel like you're walking on an uneven surface. The idea is to activate more muscles as you walk, improve your posture and provide some shock absorption for joints. Some even promise to strengthen and tone the muscles in the glutes, hips and thighs, although whether this is actually true remains to be seen.

Other 'fitness shoes' like the Reebok EasyTones and Fit Flops cropped up in the last decade as well, promising us more ways to work while we walk.

8. Extreme Weight Loss

Weight loss has always been a concern and it remained in the spotlight throughout 2000s. Slow, steady weight loss was the choice for some, but thousands chose the surgical route, with more than 100,000 people opting for weight loss surgery in 2003.

Extreme diets were another popular method of weight loss and we saw a resurgence of fad diets like Master Cleanse Diet, which requires drinking a mixture of lemon juice, syrup, water and Cayenne pepper. Yum. Other trendy diets included The Raw Food Diet and The Coconut Diet.

TV shows got in on the fun with shows like The Biggest Loser, in which overweight people compete with one another to lose weight by spending hours exercising, sweating and, occasionally, puking.

9. Core and Functional Training

We've always been somewhat obsessed with our midsection, but the 2000s brought us a new understanding: There's more to our abs than just the 6-pack (a.k.a. the rectus abdominis).

This was the decade we discovered our core, a collection of muscles in the torso that support our spine and keep us stable and balanced. The best part of this was that many of us moved away from our obsession with flat abs and focused more on strong abs.

Even better, we finally moved beyond boring old crunches in favor of fun, dynamic exercises like knee tucks, woodchops and planks.

10. Healthy Lifestyle Changes

One of the healthier trends over the last decade is a turn towards living a healthy lifestyle. While we still worry about our weight, more of us are concentrating on healthy behaviors that make us feel better and fit without obsessing on the scale.

Counting calories has become a way of life now that we can easily access online diet tools. We know more about portion sizes, fiber, good fats and bad fats than ever before and we've even learned how to read food labels.

More restaurants are providing nutritional information on their menus and even fast food joints got on the bandwagon with more salads, fruits and healthier choices. Best of all, this is the decade we started to understand that living a healthy lifestyle can actually be fun.