

Ask the EXPERTS

We put your fitness, health and nutrition questions to our panel of experts...



Q “What’s the difference between free weights and resistance machines – and which should I be using?”

Emily Johnson, Canterbury

A Chris Heron, personal trainer at Shaping Change (shapingchange.co.uk), says:

“Free weights are ‘free’ to move in any direction you please – think dumbbells, barbells and kettlebells. In contrast, resistance machines are fixed and usually adjustable to suit your height or limb length. They can aid recovery and help people add some stability to the area being trained. If you’re free from pain and injury, I would recommend free weights, but there is no shame in using resistance machines as a tool! It’s also useful to combine the two – either start with the machine, or use it after free weights to ensure that you’ve worked the chosen muscle to its absolute limit. To get the most from your free weight training session, follow my tips below:

- Ask for help if you’re a beginner.
- Perfect your form before picking up bigger weights.
- Lower the weights under controlled tension throughout the movement, don’t just drop them. Your joints will thank you and you’ll achieve better results.
- Don’t undersell yourself. When your mind says quit, push through and try performing one more rep.”

Turn to page 39 for more help with choosing the right weights for you.

Q “Every month I suffer with severe PMS. Can my diet help to control my symptoms?”

Christine James, Kent

A Naturopath Gemma Hurditch, lecturer at the College of Naturopathic Medicine (naturopathy-uk.com), says

“Yes! Try to increase your intake of calcium-rich foods such as organic tofu, sardines and sesame seeds/tahini paste. You could take a calcium citrate supplement – I recommend 1.5g of the nutrient per day starting a day or two before your PMS symptoms usually begin. In the meantime, increase your levels of magnesium by eating pumpkin seeds, spinach, organic tofu and quinoa. Some women find increasing their intake of flaxseeds useful too, particularly for breast tenderness – two tablespoons per day after ovulation is recommended. If you suffer from bloating or water retention, a probiotic formula and minimising your salt intake can also be useful. Keep commercially processed foods and fats to a minimum. Support your liver and hormone clearance by exercising and eating raw greens, particularly rocket and broccoli. Favour fish over red meats and don’t forget fibre from plenty of veg!”

Got a question you’d like to put to our experts? Drop us a line at letters@yourfinesstoday.com