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Fitness technology stepping up

ness technology that is constantly surfacing, it becomes difficult to sort out which exercise or machine is right for each person, and which is really just a product of hype.

A machine that is steadily gaining popularity in local health clubs and weight rooms is the StairMaster. It simulates the act of climbing stairs, but also offers adjust able resistance for each person's fitness level.

But does the StairMaster actually work muscles that older types of fitness equipment did hot? According to Dave Van Maren of Oregon West Fitness, this machine has an entirely different effect on the body than free weights or the Universal system.

StairMaster is an aerobic activity," Van Maren said. "It uses fat as the main fuel source while strengthening the lower body

Compared to other aerobic technology, including stationary bicycles and cross country skiing, StairMaster is an excellent workout," he ex-

The Harry Jerome Weight Center in Esslinger recently acquired a StairMaster According to Wendy Simmons of

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Oregon West members take advantage of StairMaster machines, which have become staples at local fitness clubs.

University Recreation and Intramurals, "The machine was added because of a demand for new technology as well as for the uniqueness of the features that it offers

The StairMaster gets used a lot, more by women than men," Simmons said. "Women tend to do more cardiovascular-oriented exercises, and men generally do building or anaerobic activities, though those trends are beginning to

Due to StairMaster's popularity, she said, "We really want to get another one, but because of budget problems it's not going to happen in the near future.

Soloflex equipment, on the other hand, is yet another fitness alternative. It is heavily advertised, and the campaign gives the viewer the impression that the machines can build a lot of muscle.

The people in the adver tisements look strong, and this could work for some people, but Soloflex equipment does not offer much resistance," Van Maren said. "It's mainly for people who haven't worked out very much and are looking primarily for a toning effect.

Free weights and Universal systems offer a wide variety of strengthening exercises. The Universal system is advantageous, especially for someone who is beginning, because the machines do not require spotters.

A person can move from one station to another, working various muscles without having to worry about maintaining complete control. Free weights require a lot of movement control and strength as well as a spotter for the more difficult lifts," Van Maren said.

Dumbbells, resistance devices and other free weights are also being used to tone and build muscular endurance in cardiovascular workouts.

New fitness devices that are beginning to surface, or that will be seen in Eugene within the next year, include Versaclimbers and Orbitron.

The Versaclimber resembles the StairMaster, but has an added feature that allows arm resistance to simulate rock climbing. Also emerging are new treadmills that cushion leg impact, and fully recumbent bicycles that relieve stress on the lower back

Another new device is the Orbitron, a circular machine that surrounds the person. It consists of four rings, and when the first is removed, the person can rotate end over end. When the second is removed, the rotation may go side to side as well. If the third ring is taken away, the person can rotate in any direc-

According to L.J. Hoselton of Northwest Fitness, "It (Orbitron) gives a person a full body workout because it utilizes all muscles, especially abdominals, to rotate the machine.

> -Christine Baker Tuesday, April 16, 1991



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