

Comfort plays key role in fitness fashion

Picture naked aerobics. Janet Jackson whines to a throbbing beat from the stereo as a room full of jiggling tummies strain for target heart rates and firm flesh.

Not a pretty sight, is it? Some would look attractive. For most, however, the experience could be needlessly humiliating.

Enter fitness clothing. It was obvious from the beginning that the fitness craze

would pass like any other fad if Americans couldn't look good while doing it. No longer would baggy sweats in anemic colors cut it.

On my visit to a Eugene fitness clothier, a helpful and "aerobically" fit salesperson revealed 15 racks of stylish fitness wear before I could say "tanning beds."

For women: Lycra is still the staple. The miracle fabric comes in its original, undiluted form but is more often sold in a blend with other fabrics, such as cotton.

Types available include full, calf and thigh-length tights, as well as sport-bras, bikinis and leotards.

For men: Fashion fitness clothes for both men and women are designed to display attractive features of the body. Men have fewer display-suitable appendages to work with and, consequently, find fewer workout clothes marketed to them.

Nonetheless, men make do with their limited options.

Eddie Strause, an employee of Northwest Fitness, said that gentlemen prefer "animal

shorts and tight lycra." Animal shorts are made by Hind with lycra that is thicker than the average, he said. Sporthill running pants are also popular.

For women and men: The genders agree when it comes to footwear. The name of the game is cross-trainers, and the game is played with shock-absorbing gel-packs, lateral support devices and air pumps.

Another common item is the exercise jacket. It comes in different cuts and has nylon webbing for increased breathability.

For the fashion indifferent: Yes, a large number of people still work out in old shorts or sweats and a t-shirt. They wear dated, "one-sport" tennis-shoes.

When asked about "fitness fashion," these people will stare at you quizzically before mumbling that they never really thought about it.

Joanie Schaubel, a University student, falls into this category, although she confessed to wearing lycra tights. "I just go out and sweat," she said.

— Alexander Sahaly



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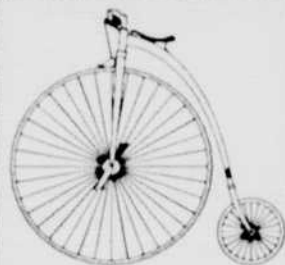
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