

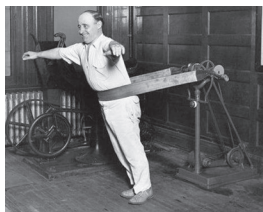
Helen to the Rescue

THE EXERCISE EVOLUTION

By **Helen Pufahl MS, NASM-CPT** Resident Contributor

Fitness, as we know it today may seem a relatively modern invention starting in the '60s and '70s with Jane Fonda. Think again! The roots of fitness go back much further to a time when people wouldn't have thought of it as working out, but rather a way of life. Running to catch your food – or avoid being it! Hunter and gatherers of prehistoric times required difficult daily tasks for survival.

It would be many thousands of years later that Indian Hindu priests would combine movement and meditation into what we refer to today as yoga. This 5,000-year-old practice is one of the oldest structured exercise programs still practiced today.



Exercise for a Purpose

Training to increase strength, speed, and endurance can be traced back to the ancient Greek Civilization (2500-200 BC). Ancient Egyptians, Greeks,



and Romans still had to move to survive like their Paleolithic ancestors, but they also had to be prepared for war.



The Greeks appreciated the body and focused on health and fitness as part of their education. In Athens, gymnastics took place in indoor facilities called palestras (the precursors to health clubs) and were supervised by a paedotribe (similar to today's personal fitness trainer).

The Chinese culture 2500-250 BC also recognized that regular exercise could prevent certain diseases. They kept their bodies conditioned by practicing Kong Fu, archery, badminton, dancing, fencing, and wrestling.

The Renaissance spurred a renewed interest in the glorification of the human body.

During this time many of today's sports evolved or took a turn for the better such as football, lawn bowling, and tennis. It was believed high fitness levels enhanced intellectual learning. The Renaissance created an environment that readied people for the widespread development of physical education that would influence training methods centuries later.

The First Commercial Gym

French gymnast and vaudeville-strongman, Hippolyte Triat opened his first club in Brussels and then added a second in Paris in the 1840s. The YMCA was founded in 1844 in London. Fitness legend Jack LaLanne in 1939 opened what is believed to be the first U.S. health club in Oakland, CA, Gold's Gym followed in 1965 signaling the beginning of a new big-box concept for health and fitness opening the doors to the masses.

During the 2000s, the use of technology has transformed the daily workout, creating an explosion of tech-heavy exercise accessories that track, stream, upload, and share virtually every step taken. This is a story that will continue to develop, as artificial intelligence appears to be the next frontier on the fitness horizon.

Life has its ups and downs, which we call squats!

Yours in Fitness,
Helen



Helen's love of fitness began at an early age. She practiced dance, gymnastics, as well as, track and field. She's an exercise physiologist with over 35 years of experience. She is also a certified personal trainer, corrective exercise specialist, nutrition consultant, and Senior fitness specialist. Owner: Unique Health & Fitness

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