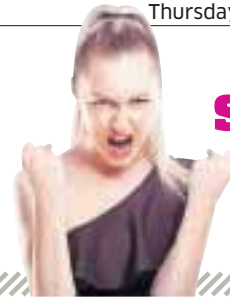




# Style | Wellbeing | Celebrity Trends



## SHOUT/OUT

We keep rowing - should I leave?

The Sex Column: Page 29 »

# How many calories do you really burn in your workout?

Calorie counts have become de rigueur as fitness apps and classes compete for fans but how much can you rely on them? **Helen Croydon** investigates

**A** SIGN at my gym invites me to join HIIT class where I can burn 'up to 400 calories' in 30 minutes. A spin class advertised on the website suggests I'll burn 675 for a 45-minute class (which equates to nearly two blueberry muffins). But will I?  
Calorie expenditure is much more complicated to calculate than calorie intake. How much we burn depends on our individual

Continued on **Page 28** »

**Breathtaking:** Helen Croydon wears an oxygen mask for her lab test



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**Trends** Style | Wellbeing | Celebrity

» Continued from Page 27

metabolic rate, heart rate, how much sleep we've had and even the food or caffeine we've consumed. In the food industry calorie claims on labels are governed by rules but there are no equivalent regulations within the fitness industry. But there are ways you can get a more accurate picture of the number of calories you burn.

**In the food industry calorie claims on labels are governed by rules but there are no such regulations within the fitness industry**

As a keen triathlete I wear a heart-rate monitor paired with a sports watch. Heart rate is a fail-safe indicator of effort, so by calculating changes in my heart rate over a workout, my watch gives me a reading of my calorie expenditure. For maximum accuracy, though, you should set your 'heart-rate zones'. These are a range of beats per minute for five training zones: easy, aerobic, threshold, anaerobic and maximum. The best way to do this is through a Vo2 max test in a lab.



**Great squat:** Calories burnt varies according to exercises



**Reach high:** Pilates classes concentrate on strengthening

# Learn your fitness facts by heart

I booked mine through Trainsmart.com (£89). It takes 15 minutes and is done on a treadmill (or stationary bike). It's not flattering: you wear an oxygen mask and heart-rate monitor, and for the last five minutes work at maximum effort. Ouch.

The most important figure is establishing your 'threshold' heart rate (the point at which your body can't produce enough oxygen for its energy needs and switches to using glucose as its main source of energy). Mine is 170bpm but for a less fit person it would be lower. With my updated heart-rate zones programmed into my sports watch, I tested what it



deemed my calorie expenditure to be against the claims of classes and apps.

**MY CALORIE EXPENDITURE VS CALORIE CLAIMS**

**Body Pump:** A popular weights/cardio class.

**CLAIMS:** The Les Mills website, which packages the classes, says you can burn up to 560 calories for a 60-minute class, depending on age, weight, gender and exercise intensity. **MY CALORIES:** 256

**Running:**

**CLAIMS:** The website MyFitnessPal estimates 40 minutes of running at 8min/mile for my age (40) and weight (53kg) to be 445 calories. **MY CALORIES:** 385

**Swimming:**

**CLAIMS:** According to SwimTag, the estimated calories for a 2km swim (approx 40 mins) for my weight and age is 340 calories. **ACTUAL CALORIES:** 142

**Spinning class:**

**CLAIMS:** After a 45-minute class at Boom Cycle, London, the monitor told me I'd burned 625 calories. **ACTUAL CALORIES:** 456

**Pilates:**

**CLAIMS:** My gym website claims a 60-minute class, which concentrates on core exercises and strengthening moves, will burn up to 400 calories. **ACTUAL CALORIES:** 110

But don't be put off. Despite the calorie count discrepancies, there are still countless benefits from exercise. And the after-burn effects mean you will continue to use more calories as your body works to restore its oxygen debt.

*This Girl Ran: Tales Of A Party Girl Turned Triathlete by Helen Croydon is published by Summersdale on Feb 8*

**IN REPLY**

MyFitnessPal said calorie goals are based on averages. Users 'have demonstrated these goals are accurate enough to provide positive results'. SwimTag said calorie calculation is an estimation: 'We use the METS method, which calculates calories burned in relation to weight and stroke type and speed'. Boom Cycle said its bikes no longer have calorie-counting monitors and that 'calories burnt isn't something Boom Cycle promotes'.

**GEAR AND GUIDANCE FOR YOUR WORKOUT**



New sportswear always makes us more keen to go to the gym. Try these Hayworth Dark Moon snake-print leggings, which come from luxe brand Varley. **£75, varley.com**



Pretty Athletic's products are designed to remove sweat, and repair hot and bothered skin. We love the purifying gel cleanser and the invigorating shower scrub. **£18/£15.50, prettyathletic.com**



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