

# Kick start your fitness with Kettlebells



In this issue, Chinnor-based personal fitness trainer, **Hilary Westall**, shares her experience of a type of fitness training that's gaining popularity amongst athletes, celebrities, personal trainers and every-day gym goers – Kettlebell training.

**C**oming up with a variety of ways to keep your workouts challenging, enjoyable and progressive can be the biggest challenge of all. I am all for discovering new, multi-purpose ways to train both myself and my clients so, having heard the hype about Kettlebell training, decided to embark on a one-day training course to find out for myself if it's a fad or a valuable fitness tool.

For those of you who haven't come across one before, a Kettlebell is a traditional Russian cast iron weight shaped like a cannon ball but with the added benefit of a handle. It is, in fact, a long-established training tool, dating back to the early 1900's, that has, over the years, been replaced by dumbbells, barbells, bands and resistance machines, but is making a comeback due to its training uses and benefits. As well as being able to perform similar lifts to those performed with barbells and dumbbells, there is a whole host of exercises that can be done with Kettlebells, as I found out.

## \*The Kettlebell exercises

My training day, with Premier International ([www.premierglobal.co.uk](http://www.premierglobal.co.uk)) was almost entirely practical with an hour at the beginning spent on theory. As a group, we were introduced to the fundamental Kettlebell moves, including the Kettlebell Front Squat, Kettlebell Swing, Kettlebell Clean, Kettlebell Snatch and the Kettlebell Turkish Get Up!

The most fundamental of the exercises, or drills, is the Kettlebell Swing, which strengthens the posterior muscle chain – the back, bottom and hamstrings, plus core and thighs - due to the powerful snapping hip extension involved in the upward arm-swing phase of the movement. This exercise alone was challenging, and I felt my entire body being put through its paces. What links all the moves together is that they force the body to work as an integral unit. Power is generated from the legs, driven through the hips and expressed through the arms. Every muscle is used and

worked to its maximum ability. When the awareness of having trained in an unfamiliar way began to set in the next day (I was stiff!), it was most definitely my whole body that was feeling it.

## A full body workout

The big difference between Kettlebells versus traditional weights is that most of us are used to performing slow, controlled lifts. The main Kettlebell drills focus on fast, explosive movements that train your body's fast twitch muscle fibres, to give you not only speed, but power - defined as strength at speed. The ballistic nature of the Kettlebell drills means the glutes, hip flexors, lower back, abdominals and core are worked, together with the cardiovascular system, resulting in a greatly improved athletic performance, transferable across a whole range of sports.

## Find the right Kettlebell weight for you

Out of condition woman	4kg
Average woman	8kg
Strong woman	12kg
Average man	16kg
Stronger than average man	20kg
Very strong man	24kg

## Train your core

Your core (your trunk minus head and limbs) is the powerhouse from which effort and movement must originate. It needs to be strong to support the forces from your arms and legs, otherwise malfunctions such as back pain and postural problems can easily develop. I've always been a big advocate of core stability training, and Kettlebell training is a fantastic way to improve core strength since the core has to support and stabilise the trunk during Kettlebell lifts - which I certainly felt.

## Muscular development

I am often asked by female clients about the likelihood of 'bulking up' from weight training. Whilst this is unlikely

to happen in most women due to their low testosterone levels, Kettlebells are an excellent choice when trying to achieve fat loss combined with a lean, well-defined physique without developing bulk as the drills are far more energy demanding than many of the more traditional weight training exercises.

## Fad or fitness tool?

My overall impression was that a Kettlebell is a great piece of kit – both for my own training needs, and to use with clients as a multifunctional training tool that's compact, effective and inexpensive. It's worth shopping around, as the shape of the handle and ball do vary slightly and you do tend to get what you pay for. However, I wouldn't advise anyone to use one without supervision from a suitably qualified professional if you want to get the best out of them. Overall though, training with them was challenging, fun, and really does give you a fantastic whole-body workout. Hopefully once they've tried it, my clients might even feel the same way...!

\*To see the Kettlebell drills in action, visit [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and put Kettlebell into the search.

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