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Whittle while you work

When it comes to exercise, most of us are looking for a shortcut, a way to lose weight and firm up without spending endless hours in the gym.

So a funky pair of sneakers that promises to tone the butt and calves sounds appealing. The same for weighted sleeves and stylish ankle weights, or a belt that creators say can shape abdominals, butt and arms.

But how well do such “exercise cheats” measure up to their claims that they’ll do the work for you? We sent four products to four experts for their evaluation.

Associated Press

BodyTogs

Weighted “sleeves” thin enough to be worn under regular clothing. Developed by a bariatric physician, they add 4 to 7 pounds to help you burn more calories, lose weight and improve overall fitness. \$69.95 for a pair for arms, \$79.95 for legs.

The expert: “We saw an increase in heart rate with the BodyTogs,” said Frank Wyatt, an associate professor of kinesiology at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls. He had two students wear the product while walking on a treadmill for 20 minutes.

But while the students were expending more energy and burning more calories with the sleeves on, they complained that they were “awkward, hot and scratchy,” he said. The students said that wearing them for day-to-day activities was unlikely because they were uncomfortable.

The verdict: Wyatt said he would need more time and test subjects to do a complete assessment. But the initial findings showed “increased work” from wearing the BodyTogs, he said.



Banglz wrist and ankle weights ▲

Manufacturer fitnessUwear says the fashionable, weighted bangles and anklets help the body burn more calories and build muscle during everyday activities or for fitness training. Wrist weights come at ½ pound (\$24.95) or 1 pound (\$27.95); ankle weights at 1 pound (\$27.95) or 2 pounds (\$41.95).

The expert: “I loved the ankle weights,” said Leigh Anne Richards, general manager of MetroFitness, a health club in Montgomery, Ala. “I could immediately tell that it was affecting my legs and glutes.” Richards, who has a master’s degree in exercise science, said she walked around in them for hours, at work and at home, and could really feel the workout.

As for the wrist weights? “I really could not tell that much of a difference,” she said.

The verdict: The wrist weights were too light, she said. “However, I did think the ankle weights could really be beneficial.”



Photos courtesy of Associated Press

Slendertone

A belt that uses electronic muscle stimulation technology to create deep yet comfortable contractions in the major abdominal muscles. Gentle signals get sent through medical-grade gel pads, the company says. You control the intensity and duration. From \$99 to \$179.99.

The expert: Tim Derrick, an associate professor of kinesiology at Iowa State in Ames, wore the ab-toning belt for 20 minutes while walking the halls.

Derrick said the clinical study that was done on the belt was “fairly sound.” More than 90 percent of participants felt they had firmer abs.

“It’s probably not going to give you a six-pack,” he said.

The verdict: “Someone who, like me, doesn’t have time to work out, it would probably benefit them,” he said.

Skechers Shape-ups

Sneakers are designed to promote weight loss, firm calf and butt muscles, improve posture and strengthen the back. Styles and colors available for men and women, starting at \$110.

The expert: The first impression for Michele Olson, a professor of exercise science at Auburn University-Montgomery in Alabama, was the heaviness of the shoe. “I could feel it working in my calves and the arches of my feet,” she said.

The verdict: I think if you are trying to shape up, it’s more important what you do in the shoes than any shoe per se,” she said.



FITNESS BRIEFS

Race for the Cure

The 27th annual Susan G. Komen Foundation fundraiser is scheduled for this Saturday. Online registration has concluded, but you can sign up in person for \$40 beginning at 6:30 a.m. at the race site, NorthPark Center. There’s a 1K fun walk/run that kicks off on Boedeker Street at 7:30 a.m., and the main event, the 5K walk/run, starts on Park Lane at 8:30 a.m. Both races will begin and end at the mall. Not in the mood to run or wake up early? You can Sleep In for the Cure — you can even win a prize for it! For more information on the race, visit komen-dallas.org.

Sweat for the cure

It goes without saying that you should bring plenty of water, workout wear and comfy shoes for the Race for the Cure. Another must-wear is deodorant, and one company has a product that cancer fighters can rally behind. Pristine Beauty’s founder, Blair Kessler, is a young cancer survivor who decided to create gentle, 100 percent pure cosmetics after dealing with

post-treatment hair and skin problems. Among her products is Take a Whiff! natural deodorant. It’s free of aluminum, paraben and phthalates and a portion of its proceeds benefit cancer survivor and prevention organizations. It’s a practical way to “race” for the cure every day. \$22 at amazon.com/beauty.



Pristine Beauty

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