

TRAMPOLINE | FROM HF1

Facility offers great aerobic exercise, and the fun factor is sky-high

Because rebound exercise, as it's called, is low-impact, "it doesn't pound the vertebrae," says Jeff Wolls, an exercise physiologist by training and director of recreational sports at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, where thousands of students take part in SkyZone games. "We have a tendency to enjoy the type of exercise that is nonimpact. You don't think of it so much as hard work, so the direct benefit is F-U-N, and it still gives you all the benefits of a tough cardio exercise."

He says studies have shown that even a baby who can't walk yet can lie on a trampoline-type surface and get his or her heart rate up when someone bounces the surface up and down.

"Just that movement gets your heart rate going," he says. Add purposeful movement, such as throwing balls and moving back and forth or side to side, and you've got a tough workout.

Studies have shown that rebound exercise can burn up to 1,000 calories an hour, depending on how hard you are jumping.

For athletes who use rebound exercise as a kind of cross-training, the benefit is better body control off the court, better spatial awareness and better hand-eye coordination.

Family fitness

At SkyZone a lot of the emphasis is on family fitness.

Karen Sandroni, 36, of Ballwin, was there one recent afternoon with her daughter, Skylar, 9.

"It's just a really great way to exercise with your kids," Sandroni says. "I'm not really motivated to work out on my own (though she says she walks four days a week because she feels she has to), but this is fun. It gets your heart rate up a lot faster than you think."

"So many people can't get their kids to exercise," says Platt, "but we have the opposite problem. We can't them off here, they love it so much."

SkyZone has a special area for toddlers (ages 1-3) to bounce



Members of the Yellow Book team celebrate a win in a game of trampoline dodge ball at the SkyZone Recreational Center. Jerry Naunheim Jr. | Post-Dispatch

around on, and parents are encouraged to join them. There is a court designed just for dodgeball and a general bouncing area. They hope to separate younger children with a new playing area being built now. An additional playing area is being built to train top-tier athletes.

SkyRobics

In Las Vegas, SkyRobics classes are all the rage, and they are starting to catch on here, too.

As the name implies, it's like an aerobics class, only on the trampoline surface.

"It combines both aerobic and anaerobic components of physical activity," says Amy Strahan, a trainer at Nutriformance and now a SkyRobics instructor. "SkyRobics gives people the ability to train with low impact, yet still benefit from the positive effects of impact, such as the effects on bone density and strengthening connective tissues. Muscular strength,

muscular endurance and cardio-respiratory fitness are all systems that can be trained at the same time."

Because of the instability of the surface, you are always working your core and perfecting aerial awareness, says Strahan.

One of the most unique things to come out of a SkyRobics class is learning how to "rounce," a combination of running and bouncing. "This is the most effective way to move about on the court," says Strahan.

Willenbrink says you can add an upper-body workout by using a 9-pound medicine ball.

"You can get a whole-body workout and a cardio workout. You feel exhilarated," she says. "It's like you are flying in the air."

Strahan says that because the concept is so new, it may take some time for the word to spread, "but I do believe it will be a popular alternative or supplement to the more traditional forms of group fitness that currently exist."

never jump on a trampoline at home, because those can be dangerous, but you don't ever feel that here."

Of course, you have to sign a liability waiver. Other rules include no cell phones, and you have to empty your pockets.

Some injuries are bound to occur, says Platt, mainly sprained ankles and injuries resulting from two bodies in motion colliding.

But in three years in Las Vegas, he says, that facility has never seen one serious accident.

Other uses

In Las Vegas, one of the big draws of the SkyZone facility is the game of SkyZone, which Platt helped to create based on the playing field. In it, players try to throw a ball or

leap through a rotating ring at each end of the court. Platt has even started a professional SkyZone league.

At UNLV, it's a huge hit among intramural athletes.

Wolls says his school uses the Las Vegas Skyzone for intramural dodgeball, flag football and SkyZone the game.

The SkyZone facility can also be used for corporate team building (imagine the people you work with bouncing around on a trampoline), and it's been used for birthday parties and groups of physically challenged kids, including those with cerebral palsy and autism.

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