

personal trainer

* YOGA GURU BARBARA CURRIE * REAL LIFE: BOXING THE POUNDS AWAY * BOOST YOUR WILLPOWER *

Anyone for tennis?

It's Wimbledon this month – so why not ditch the gym and swap your weights for a racket?

You may not be Britain's answer to Maria Sharapova, but take up a racquet sport and you might just be on the way to matching the Grand Slam champ's enviable physique. A 30-minute round of singles tennis burns around 280 calories, gives you a full-body workout and is fantastic for your flexibility. Focusing on your forehand and serve will work your biceps and chest, while belting backhands across the court tones your triceps and shoulders.

Unlike jogging, cycling or swimming, the explosive movements needed to lunge for a ball strengthen your 'fast-twitch' muscle fibres, which have been linked to a reduced risk of neuro-muscular disorders like Parkinson's disease. It's not just your muscles that will feel the effect, either – according to the President's Council On Fitness, Sports & Nutrition, in the US, mixing individual exercise with a competitive sport helps us to set and achieve goals, and cope better with confrontation in the workplace and at home.

If you don't fancy a full-on head-to-head, start with a three-on-three game with friends. You'll have less ground to cover, and you can work your muscles without being run ragged. Try sticking to the four serving boxes and gradually moving backwards as your accuracy and stamina improve. Be sure to reward your efforts with a post-match team tea – just go easy on the strawberries and cream!

PRACTICE SOLO

Want to master some moves in private before taking to the courts? Pro Swingball is an adult-sized version of the childhood classic. £36.60, amazon.co.uk