

# The double-workout craze: cardio in the morning, weights in the afternoon

Is there a limit to how much you should work out? **Ruby Warrington** reports on the latest fitness craze to hit New York body obsessives

**I**t was over a late night New York supper on the Lower East Side that my friend Gala let slip that she'd been doing two workouts a day that week. I was still trying to assimilate the fact that this otherwise perfectly normal woman had apparently crossed the body-fanatic divide when she told me the reason why — it had something to do with her dual boxercise/Pilates habit and having to fit around her trainers' schedules.

"It doesn't actually feel like that much, just like I'm getting a really good workout," she told me.

A successful lifestyle blogger, Gala represents a growing tribe of Manhattan women who are taking the city's way-of-life workout culture to the next level and

regularly fitting in two — if not three — limit-testing workouts in a single day, often many times a week.

It might sound extreme but in a city that attracts a certain competitive "type A" personality and where there are approximately 517 gyms (roughly one for every 20 restaurants, with more opening each week), there is a certain logic to the phenomenon. A case of demand rising up to meet supply. "There are so many classes I want to try now, I've been inspired to start working out more often," says 30-year-old Jen Blackford, a British expat who regularly doubles up her workouts.

Liz Maloy, a 36-year-old marketing executive for an investment bank, says that she started working out twice a day when she became a serious runner.

Having completed eight marathons to date, "I have to do yoga or strength training too to get my body back to normal," she says. "It's a snowball effect — the more you work out, the more you have to!"

Maloy does a double "at least twice a week, if not three times and sometimes I'll sneak one on a Saturday too", and claims that she often hits a 6am class to juggle her workouts alongside her social life and heavy workload.

Claiming that her obsession isn't about weight loss ("I can cut weight if I stick to eating really clean too, but then you're having no fun"), for her the fact that "I think physically you can tell I work out a lot" is secondary to achieving and maintaining a high level of fitness. "I do a class called the Brooklyn Bridge Bootcamp and at the end of the season there's a two-hour class where the last person to hold their plank wins title of Bootcamp Champion. I won it this year," she says, as if it was all in a day's work(out).

Having lived in London before her move to New York seven years ago, Blackford says: "I could never have done two workouts a day there — it takes too long to get around. In Manhattan everything is a 15-minute cab ride and there's a boutique studio on every corner. When I lived in Hackney there was nothing for miles."

The cost of maintaining this gruelling schedule is not to be sniffed at — with membership at upscale gym chain Equinox costing upwards of \$160 (£100) a month, and more specialised "boutique" classes coming in anywhere from \$25 to \$40 a session. "My friends and I joke that once you throw in a cab there and back, a visit to [cult spinning studio] SoulCycle can end up being a \$60 class!" says Maloy. "But I'd rather spend my money on this than cocktails or online shopping."

And if Carrie and Co in *Sex and the City* were all about the Cosmo and the Manolos, shoes and booze aren't the only things women are

“It's a snowball effect — the more you work out, the more work you have to do

prepared to sacrifice to support their twice-a-day habit. Publicist Jana Fleishman cites sleep, dining out and taxis as other luxuries she's prepared to forgo to feed her SoulCycle addiction — regularly rising at 4.30am so she can fit in a 6am class before work.

So at what point does a healthy habit become a potentially dangerous addiction? According to Shelly Dammeyer, of New York's Eating Disorder Resource Center, "it's a warning sign when the thinking around exercise shifts from a place of enjoyment to viewing it more as a kind of punishment: 'I'm a failure if I don't run that extra mile.'" Alarm bells also go off for her if exercise, like anything else, is a way to avoid dealing with other stuff that's going on, such as work stress.

And is it even worth the effort? Dammeyer also cites "stress fractures" — where repeated (rather than sudden) mechanical movements cause small fractures to the bones — as another cause for concern. Meanwhile, strength and conditioning specialist Doug

Barsanti recommends two shorter workouts to bookend your day — rather than two full-length workouts. "Generally speaking, working out for longer than an hour a day runs your body into the ground. You'll get so tired that you'll actually lose strength and therefore lose muscle — not to mention losing the enthusiasm to exercise," he explains. But for the women I speak to, it seems their commitment to the cause is mostly about a sense of achievement — with a side order of endorphin-fuelled feel-good factor.



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