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New treadmill creates buzz

By David Quick (Contact)
Tuesday, July 21, 2009



Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Michael Roizen, the YOU Docs, are well-known for their regular appearances on "Oprah" and the Discovery Health Channel and are the authors of the best-sellers "YOU: The Owner's Manual" and "YOU: On a Diet."

I loathe treadmills.

In fact, the last time I ran on one was probably 10 years ago when severe lightning forced me out of a regularly scheduled track workout with friends.



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David Quick
The Post and Courier

Jenny Skinner, 30, of Mount Pleasant runs on the Woodway SpeedBoard nonmotorized treadmill at ECO Fitness in Mount Pleasant.

Running on a treadmill makes me feel like a caged mouse running in a wheel. First, you go nowhere, hence the oft-used metaphor of "running on a treadmill" for going nowhere fast. Second, you're indoors. Then, you have to push all these buttons to start, pick a program, speed up or slow down, and have to look at all these red lights flashing at you, telling you how long, what level or zone you're running in, how many calories you're running off, etc.

To top it off, treadmills are noisy and actually burn energy so that you can burn energy.

All of it just seems to create the notion that exercise is drudgery, which it shouldn't be. It should be our nation's natural, inexpensive drug of choice. Granted, some people may actually enjoy running and walking on a treadmill and the most important thing about exercise is getting people to find what they like to do and do it.

For me, even with the addition of TVs to treadmills, I have not been tempted.

But now there's a treadmill that I may be apt to use.

The gym I go to, ECO Fitness in Mount Pleasant recently got two Woodway SpeedBoard nonmotorized treadmills that have been creating a buzz among members here and at health clubs across the nation.

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The SpeedBoard, which made its debut in March at the International Health and Racquet Sports Association trade show in San Francisco, isn't the first nonmotorized treadmill that has hit the market, but it is the first one that is actually smooth and sturdy, according to Woodway's marketing director Eric Weber.

"Part of the excitement about the SpeedBoard is that it works so well. In the past, the user experience has not been good," Weber says in a phone interview from the Wakesha, Wis.-based office. (Woodway makes its treadmills right here in the U-S-A! Yeah!)

The SpeedBoard features a sophisticated curved design and near-frictionless drive system that allows the user to speed up, or slow down, instantly, rather than push buttons and wait.

That's what drew ECO's Dave Fox to it. For years, Fox has wanted to incorporate treadmills into Spinning classes, but the slow reaction time of treadmills prevented it.

"The SpeedBoard is very reactive. As you run into the curve, it reacts fast," says Fox, who started working it into Spinning classes in late June. He adds that personal trainers have incorporated it into boot-camp group training sessions and that individuals have been using it for cardio equipment.

"It's a piece of equipment I like to get because it's so versatile," he said.

And yet not many of us, especially in these hard economic times, will be able to afford one for home use.

Weber says Woodway's introductory price of the SpeedBoard is \$5,500 and that the price will be going up into the range of the company's other treadmills, which run \$7,000 to \$15,000. He adds that the SpeedBoard and other Woodway products eventually add up to a better value because they use less electricity (SpeedBoard obviously uses none), require less maintenance and last four times longer than most treadmills.

ECO member Jenny Skinner, who had run on the SpeedBoard three times as of last Friday, says she thinks many members may shy away from it because of the challenge of running on it.

"It's definitely a different workout than running on the road or treadmill and is actually harder than both," says Skinner, 30, of Mount Pleasant. "I don't think many people will use it because it is very challenging. A lot of people get on a treadmill, they set a pace and stick to it. They don't challenge themselves. ... Many of them pay (for memberships) to have the TVs and the luxury of fans blowing on them."

Skinner says the SpeedBoard is a treadmill for people who want to focus on their workout, rather than divert their attention from it.

I have to agree. I jumped on the SpeedBoard for about three minutes. By treadmill standards, it's the best. Smooth, quiet and pure, and even beautiful in a sculptural way.

But it's still a treadmill. Other than warming up for a leg workout, it'll probably take something extreme — like another severe lightning storm — to force me to run inside and on it. At least I'll have a better option.

Reach **David Quick** at 937-5516 or dquick@postandcourier.com.

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AP HEALTH NEWS

Obama turns health care focus to families, voters



CLEVELAND (AP) — Against worsening odds for congressional floor votes any time soon in Congress, President Barack Obama went back on the road Thursday to argue for health care changes amid increasing qualms among the public.

Reid: No health care vote in Senate until fall

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democratic leaders on Thursday abandoned plans for a vote on health care before Congress' August recess, dealing a blow to President Barack Obama's ambitious timetable to revamp the nation's \$2.4 trillion system of medical care.

House Blue Dogs flex new muscle on health care

WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservative-leaning Blue Dog Democrats are enjoying a power surge like no other in their 15 years, forcing President Barack Obama and their own party leaders to deal with their demands for cost cuts and tax restraints in overhauling health care.

Obama turns health care focus to families, voters

WASHINGTON (AP) — After weeks of urging lawmakers to embrace his health care agenda, President Barack Obama is taking his case back to the road Thursday as the public's qualms about the plan seem to be growing.

Obama takes health care campaign to Cleveland

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is taking his campaign for health care reform to Cleveland today.

Va. Tech shooter's mental health records surface

BLACKSBURG, Va. (AP) — The discovery of missing mental health records of the Virginia Tech gunman has victims' families and the governor questioning the thoroughness of the criminal investigation into the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

FACT CHECK: Obama's health care claims adrift?

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's assertion Wednesday that government will stay out of health care decisions in an overhauled system is hard to square with the proposals coming out of Congress and with his own rhetoric.

Obama was meeting with health execs in February

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's administration began holding private meetings with health industry executives at the White House a few weeks after he took office, a visitor list released Wednesday night by the White House shows. Lobbyists were among those there to talk health care.

Obama argues system dictates health care choices

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama suggested Wednesday that under the current health care system, doctors make medical decisions based on what they would be paid for a procedure rather than the best treatment.

Obama: Some left out of his health plan

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama says that even if he gets the health care overhaul he's pushing for, some Americans will be left without insurance.

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