

LIVE WELL EVERY DAY™

Woman's Day®



miraculous makeovers
mom's favorite recipes
slim down for summer

plug in, work out

Wii Fit
Balance
Board

What is exer-gaming?

Exer-games are video games that get your whole body moving. The two most popular options are the Wii Fit Plus and the Xbox 360 Kinect. (A newer contender is the PlayStation Move.) They use a motion sensor so that when you move, you affect what happens onscreen. For example, every time you step or punch while playing Rhythm Boxing on the Wii Fit Plus, your onscreen avatar follows suit.

Do these games count toward the recommended 30 minutes of moderate exercise per day? Absolutely. In terms of calories burned, playing active video games is comparable to mild to moderate physical activity (like walking or casual bike riding), according to a review in the journal *Pediatric Exercise Science*. And the American Heart Association recently partnered with Nintendo to promote exer-games (including the Wii Fit Plus) as one way to be more active. These games are great for anyone who prefers to work out at home, says Rebecca Battista, PhD, an associate professor

in the department of health, leisure and exercise science at Appalachian State University in North Carolina. The competitive aspect—racking up points and advancing to higher levels—can also be a big motivator.

How hard will I be working out? If sitting on the couch is a 0 and running a marathon is a 10, most exer-games will put you in the 3 to 5 range, says exercise physiologist Pete McCall, a spokesman for the American Council on Exercise. But it depends on the game. Activities that come with the Wii Fit Plus mostly provide light to moderate exercise, but some—like tennis and cycling—really get your heart rate up. Most of the activities that come with the Xbox 360 Kinect (Kinect Adventures) provide moderate to intense exercise, but there are others (like bowling in Kinect Sports) that are relatively light.

Is hitting an imaginary ball with an imaginary racquet or following an avatar personal trainer as good as “regular” exercise? Here’s what you should know.

Is spending more time in front of a screen really good for kids? Exer-games get kids’ muscles working and their heart rate up, which is definitely a good thing. That said, experts caution against letting

these games be their only form of exercise. “They help get kids active, but they do nothing to promote skill development,” says Dr. Battista. For example, a child may excel at Wii Sports baseball but not be able to play “real” baseball very well. Relying solely on screen time also doesn’t give kids time outdoors in nature or the socialization and skills you gain by playing a team sport or even a game of tag.

I want to lose 20 pounds. Will these games help? Yes—especially if you weren’t exercising at all before, says McCall. “If your main goal is to drop a dress size or two, these games are a great place to start.” Keep in mind that you may need to play for a while (studies show that you need 60 to 90 minutes of exercise five days a week for weight loss), and don’t eat more to make up for the extra activity.
Barbara Brody (Please turn to page 110)

I did it!

Rebecca Meyer, 36, of Delray Beach, Florida, lost 55 pounds by exer-gaming.

Rebecca before she started exer-gaming (below) and today (right).



My past weight-loss attempts failed... Because I hated exercise and felt too restricted on diets. When my dad got me a Wii, I purchased the Wii Fit Plus, thinking “maybe this will be fun.” It was, but the activities included weren’t that intense, so I wanted something extra. That’s when I found Just Dance, in which you learn dance routines to popular songs.

The weight came off... By accident. Just Dance was so much fun and aiming for high scores was so motivating that I found myself playing for over an hour every day. I ended up losing 1 to 2 pounds per week. I was 180 when I started; now I’m about 125. When I stepped on the Wii Fit Balance Board and it said my weight was “normal,” I couldn’t believe it.

My advice... Focus on having fun. My goal isn’t losing weight—it’s getting a high score every time.

SLIGHT ADVANTAGE: REAL-LIFE TENNIS

Playing tennis burns approximately 8 calories per minute (compared to 5 calories per minute playing Wii Sports tennis), according to a study from the American Council on Exercise.



system smackdown

HOW THE TWO TOP SELLERS STACK UP

Wii Fit Plus

What you need

Wii console (\$199.99) + Wii Fit Plus Balance Board and game disk (\$99.99). (Note: If you have the original Wii Fit, get new games and custom workouts with the Plus disk, \$19.99.)

Comes with

More than 40 different activities, from boxing and skiing to hula-hooping and strength-training.

Good for kids?

Yes. The graphics are cartoon-like and many of the activities—such as Snowball Fight and Big Top Juggling—are kid-friendly.

Good for seniors?

Yes. The activities in the balance section are especially useful, as they strengthen your core, which may help preserve your posture and prevent dangerous falls as you age. Bowling (in Wii Sports) is also popular with seniors.

Best games to break a sweat

Island Cycling (on Wii Fit Plus disk); tennis (on Wii Sports disk, which comes with console). We also like the strength-training moves for toning.

Xbox 360 Kinect

Xbox 360 4GB console with Kinect (\$299.99). (Note: If you already have an Xbox 360 console, you can buy the Kinect sensor for \$149.99.)

Kinect Adventures, which includes six activities (such as River Rush, in which you navigate rapids, and Reflex Ridge, a kind of obstacle course).

Yes, if you choose the right game. The ones in Kinect Adventures are all kid-friendly. Kids will also like Kinectimals (sold separately), a treasure hunt.

Maybe. Some of the games are pretty physically intense, but older adults will enjoy driving games like Joyride and those that focus on strength and toning, like Your Shape: Fitness Evolved (both sold separately).

Kinect Adventures (included) and Dance Central (sold separately). We also like Your Shape (sold separately) for toning.

we
tried it

WOMAN'S DAY STAFFERS WEIGH IN ON EACH SYSTEM

WE LOVE

- Comes with a wide variety of activities (40+), so you don't necessarily have to buy any extra.
- Very easy to set up and navigate the system.
- Tests body mass index (BMI) and tracks your progress (how often you play, whether you've gained or lost weight, etc.).

CONS

- Most activities are very brief, so the only way to get a decent workout is to keep repeating them.
- It "talks" too much; voice is kind of annoying and wastes time that we'd rather spend playing.
- BMI measurements are used to change the shape of your onscreen avatar ("Mii"), so if you're overweight it will make you look rounder. ("It made my son cry and he never wanted to play again," says one staffer.)

Xbox 360 Kinect

- No remote, so you don't have to hold anything while you're moving.
 - A wide range of more intense activities is available.
 - Takes snapshots of you while you're playing certain games and gives you the option of sharing these online.
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- Most games are sold separately (and each one is about \$50).
 - Other people or pets in the background may interfere with the sensor.
 - Not ideal for smaller rooms (you need a minimum of 6 to 8 feet between you and the sensor, but even more space would be better).

