

# the power of an hour

How much time does it take to get fit? Sally Singer clocks in and out of the gym.



Sometime last summer, I began to notice that the office seemed a little more crowded and less sweaty than usual. Whereas previously, at lunchtime or the end of the day, colleagues would disappear for two hours before returning from the gym or the yoga class, now they seemed to be hanging around and no flabbier for it. It turned out that the time-on-their hands brigade were converts to very slow weight training -i.e., one 20 to 30 minute session of wildly intense lifting per week and nothing else.

Needless to say, to those of us still trekking up Stair Masters or climbing Alpe d'Huez on stationary bikes, this came as a blow: Why were we killing ourselves to get to the gym five days a week, perspiring like mad and worrying about our blowouts, if one short, unsticky burst in your work clothes was enough? Then again, the slow motioners were themselves fretting: Could it really be that they didn't need cardio? Were their hearts getting weaker as their thighs got sleeker? To put it another way: How much time does it take to get fit? (If that sounds a tad Carrie Bradshaw, consider it an homage before the feature film lands next month.)

Let's be clear: By fitness, I'm not talking about a fast-fix weight-loss scheme. If you want to lose weight, eat less, especially less of white things, and don't drink. Virtually everyone agrees on this. More controversial by far is the question of what's required to be fit in the sense of being strong, healthy, and in possession of a lean body mass.

My first stop was in Los Angeles, with Valerie Waters responsible, most famously, for getting Jennifer Garner into shape for *Alias* (and for civilian life as a mom). Waters is a cute blonde (think Heather Locklear) who surfs on her days off. She also has the very human streak of honesty, which makes her endearing: She'll confess to gaining six pounds when she went vegetarian (she now eats meat, but only organic and hormone-free). With Waters I did four brisk



hours a week of strength training and the two additional 30-minute cardio sessions on my own. In the gym, she works quickly and lightly: lots and lots of reps of lifting lighter weights, at a fast clip. She is the deviser of Valslides, innocuous foot-shaped pads that slide under hand or foot and render even the simplest plank of lunge utterly deadly. After three sets of 20, I was ready to confess anything (even to having eaten a second slice of Ezekiel toast, Water's favorite complex carb, with almond butter for breakfast). Where Waters differs from others is in her belief that women should

train differently than men. A regular challenge in Hollywood, she says, is to "reverse the results" actresses and models have achieved elsewhere; i.e., appearing too muscular. Jennifer Garner, Kerry Washington: These women look slim and healthy and not Madonna-on-tour. Waters wears you out but doesn't bulk you up. I take my Valslides with me everywhere now (and also the Valband, a small green resistance elastic that turns inner thigh to jelly).

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