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# Bedroom boost

Strong sex life linked to improved health, fitness

By CHRIS ATCHISON  
Metro Toronto

**C**armen Puyo was like many overweight women whose self-esteem sank as her waistline grew.

When matters of girth were getting out of control, Puyo — now a trainer at Extreme Fitness in Toronto — took steps to get her weight under control and entered the fitness industry to solidify her change in lifestyle.

Her love handles long since melted away since she started training more than 10 years ago, Puyo introduced a new class to her clients called Cardio Erotica, a sensual cardio class to help people (mainly women) improve their body image. The class has been wildly successful, and as the trainer quickly learned, has proven beneficial in the bedrooms of her pupils.

"I've gotten e-mails from (husbands) saying, 'Thank you so much,'" she says.

This boost in bedroom activity is not only fun, but provides countless physical and even fitness benefits. But can sex ever replace time spent in the gym as a sole means of exercise?

Some, such as author Kerry McCloskey, who penned the book *The Ultimate Sex Diet* chronicling her battle to

shed weight using sex as a key exercise tool, believe that if nothing else, a strong sex life is a great start on the road to improved health and fitness.

Puyo concurs: "In the part where fitness releases endorphins and makes you feel good about yourself, the more you'll get sex," she says. "If you're with the right person ... as far as how you feel mentally and physically, it's the same as how you feel when you're working out."

As far as sex being used as a technique for calorie burning, Puyo points out there are plenty of variables, namely intensity, to take into account when calculating the number of calories burned during each roll in the hay. That said, intense sex can burn hundreds of calories per session — assuming it lasts for more than a few minutes. Men take note.

The health benefits of safe sex have long been accepted in the medical community — improved immune activity, lower blood pressure, stress relief and improved body image are just a few, according to U.S.-based sex expert and author Dr. Yvonne K. Fulbright.

In fact, a study by the University of Bristol in the early 1990s found that over a 10-year study period, the mortality risk in a male group with high orgasmic frequency

was 50 per cent lower than in a similar group with low orgasmic frequency.

Safe sex, it can be concluded, is good for the body and mind. But as a replacement for your everyday workout, think again, says Toronto-based sex therapist and author Josey Vogels. "I would think of it more as a complement," she says. "There have been studies done that the more physically fit you are, the more you work out, the better you feel about your body and the healthier you are and the more sexual you will feel."

Extreme Fitness' Mr. and Mrs. Yoga demonstrate an intimate yoga pose.

EXTREME FITNESS PHOTO

## positioning a factor for pregnant women

A positive pregnancy test needn't sound the death knell for a couple's sex life. But as Dr. Alvin Pettle of Toronto's Ruth Pettle Wellness Centre explains, positioning becomes a factor when a woman is pregnant.

A pregnancy needn't sound the death knell for a couple's sex life, experts say.

"Any position that's missionary can cut the blood supply off for the baby and her," Pettle explains.

"The uterus can fall right back on the interior vena cava and, in a position of sleeping, a woman should always sleep on her side while pregnant. (Missionary position) would be a bad position to be in for intercourse in a pregnancy."

But there is hope for pregnant couples intent on preserving that ever-crucial intimacy.

Dr. Yvonne K. Fulbright, a U.S.-based sex expert and author, recommends these positions for maintaining a healthy sex life in the months before baby arrives:

» Supported side-by-side (she and her partner are cuddling, facing the

same direction).

» Woman-on-top (leaves her in charge).

» Sex in a chair (she's sitting on her lover and they're facing the same direction).

» Rear entry, with partners kneeling (and the woman's stomach supported with a pillow for extra comfort). — CHRIS ATCHISON/METRO TORONTO



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