



Blast your way to fitness in 21 days

Meet the mid-life health guru who can get you in shape this new year



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Sunday



Blast your way to fitness in 21 days

*Fiftysomething Annie Deadman says she can get anyone in shape in three weeks. **Lucy Dunn** signs up...*

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COVER STORY

Did you overindulge this Christmas? If so, Lucy Dunn suggests spending the next 21 days following Annie Deadman's fitness plan...

The first thing that strikes me when I meet Annie Deadman is how incredibly normal she is. I am expecting a media-savvy Lululemon leggings-clad fitness "guru" who will churn out Instagram-friendly sound bites and make me feel fat and inadequate.

Instead, I find a 58-year-old woman-next-door who lives what she teaches, which is that any busy midlifer – woman or man – can learn to eat better and move more without too much sacrifice or effort. Energetic, practical and a touch scatty, she's generous almost to a fault; despatching me with herbal tea and a pack of chicken sausages after a training session in her home with the instructions: "Eat more protein!"

We first meet at the *Telegraph's* offices as I prepare to embark on the workout and diet regime detailed in her new book *The 21-Day Blast Plan*. The idea is to chat to her a couple of times over the next three weeks. I moot a workout together. "Oh brilliant!" she claps her hands in delight. "So you actually want to do the whole thing, do you?" I nod. I may be busy, but I am a no-half-measures type of person: if I am going to test out her plan, I am going to do it properly.

There are times over the next three weeks when I regret this. But I am on a mission: I want to lose about half a stone and hoik myself out of my junk-diet-no-exercise rut. I am also a little sceptical – will Deadman really put me through my paces? She looks amazing; toned not skinny; it's just that she doesn't look like the stereotypical personal trainer. Where are the Lululemon leggings?

How quick am I to judge. Her HIIT (high intensity interval training) sessions, which take about 20 to 30 minutes, may be designed to do in your living room, but, if you follow them to the letter, they make you sweat and work you hard. The programme is

not patronising. Deadman stresses you're not expected to master loads of complex moves, but to "just have a go". I do the workouts in my sports bra and pants – needs must, you get hot. Apologies to the postman who is probably wishing he could unsee the sight of me star-jumping in my underwear.

Deadman's approach has all the hallmarks of having been devised by a woman who found healthy eating and fitness a little later on in life. "I was in my late 30s, just had my second daughter, and went to enrol with a new GP," she says. "And this nurse looks at me, and says, completely out of the blue, 'you could do with losing a stone'. In my head I thought 'damn you!', but her words stuck."

At first Deadman did what many new to exercise tend to do – she zipped outdoors for a jog, "which was torture", eventually enrolling in classes on a path to getting in shape. She started learning about health and fitness, booking herself on nutrition and personal training courses, and eventually setting herself up to teach clients one-on-one. After the break-up of her marriage, she decided she needed to earn cash so began formulating her Blast Plan online.

Success arrived by accident – unbeknown to her, a local journalist had enrolled on her plan and lost two stone over six months. "There I was, trying to

FIT AND THEY KNOW IT
Lucy Dunn and Annie Deadman performing squat jumps, main; Dunn has a go at a wall squat with Deadman's help, below left



AGES: ANDREW CROWLEY FOR THE TELEGRAPH



THE RIGHT TYPE OF MIDLIFE EXERCISE

The workouts I recommend don't require any equipment. You just use your body weight. The strength work (also called resistance training) is performed slowly. It does involve taking your muscles out of their comfort zone, challenging

them and making them hurt a bit. That way, you are "overloading" the muscle and it then adapts to become denser, stronger and firmer. You will not look like a bodybuilder, but you will become more toned. Those toned muscles will tap into your fat

stores to keep your muscles in their new state. The cardio work we do in the Blast workouts is short and sharp, and is also known as high-intensity interval training (HIIT). To someone new to exercise, 20 seconds of mountain climbers is going

to feel very intense, whereas to someone else it might feel like a warm-up. The HIIT work compounds what we've done in the strength sections. In short, this is the bit that at first you will hate, then later you will find ever so slightly addictive.

THE BLAST WORKOUTS

You may already be in a workout routine and be quite fit, or you may just be dipping your toe in the water. Either way, we don't want it to take over our lives, so on the Blast plan there are just four workouts to do each week, of 20 to 30 minutes in length, combining a

number of exercises. (I spent twice that time staring at my phone in bed the other night.) Your body is going to come alive, your metabolism will be reignited and your fat (released from its life in those fat cells) is going to be put to good use. And remember, we

are trying to "overload" so the body "adapts". The four workouts are divided up as follows and are: **WORKOUT 1** Lower Body and Cardio **WORKOUT 2** Upper Body, Core and Cardio **WORKOUT 3** Lower and Upper Body (and no Cardio)

WORKOUT 4 Whole Body including a bit of Cardio Before each workout, you must warm up. At the end you will need to stretch and cool down. This will help your muscles regain their length and will also help prevent soreness.

SIX BLAST EXERCISES



LOWER BODY

1 CURTSY LUNGES

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and take a big step back and across as if doing a curtsy. Keep your front foot, your chest and your hips facing forwards and your back knee should drop to the floor. Feel it in your



2 WALL SQUATS

Start by leaning against a wall with your legs out in front, then slowly lower yourself so your hips are at the same level as your knees. Hold that position for 30-40 seconds; you'll feel like a real lemon and it will hurt. To come out of

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ANNIE'S ANYTIME FOOD LIST

These are the foods that you eat for the meals before a workout and on those days when you are not exercising at all.

ALL FRESH AND PROCESSED MEAT

Beef, lamb, pork, chicken, etc.



ALL FISH

Including shellfish (nothing with breadcrumbs or a non-natural coating pretending to be something exotic).

EGGS

For baking and cooking. **GOOD RUSK - OR GLUTEN-FREE SAUSAGES** These should contain minimal sugar and a high meat content (more than 95 per cent).

BACON As lean as possible. Just natural, not covered in a flavouring.

PULSES AND BEANS

Chickpeas, lentils, split

peas, all types of beans (kidney, cannellini, butter etc, tinned or dried).

TOFU Including tempeh and plain Quorn products.

YOGURT Natural unsweetened yogurt, the higher protein the better.

VEGETABLES

Apart from potatoes, sweet potatoes, butternut squash and parsnips, all vegetables and salad ingredients are permitted - the more the better!

NUTS AND SEEDS - WITH CAUTION!

These make good snacks, but watch portion size. Obviously not the sticky caramel honey-roasted kind - just plain or roasted and salted.



NUT BUTTERS

Almond or peanut (without palm oil or sugar). Take care though - it's very tempting to go to bed with the jar and a spoon.

FRUIT

Tomatoes, avocados, plus low-carbohydrate fruits - which amounts to berries, melons and peaches.

OILS Olive, sesame, walnut, avocado, coconut and rapeseed. Be sparing!



HOT DRINKS Coffee or tea (one per day) and then as many herbal teas and fruit teas as you can drink. **ALTERNATIVES TO COW'S MILK**

Unsweetened almond, soya, coconut, hemp. Goat's milk is permitted although some find this a bit farmyard-y.

SAUCES AND SPICES

Soy sauces, tamari sauce, apple cider vinegar, sugar-free stock powder or cubes. All herbs and spices can be used with gay abandon.



ANNIE'S AFTER-WORKOUT FOOD LIST

This list contains carb-rich foods that must be eaten in the meal that directly follows one of your workouts. Choose one portion of these to add to anything in the Anytime list.

OATS And any other non-wheat grains such as amaranth, sorghum and teff, which, despite sounding like posh children's names, have impressive nutritional stats. They can be cooked like quinoa or rice.

QUINOA, RICE All types and colours.

BUCKWHEAT The flour and groats. Coconut flour is also permitted.

STARCHY VEGETABLES Potatoes, sweet potatoes, butternut squash and parsnips.

WHEAT-FREE PASTA There are several varieties on the market,



'Amaranth, sorghum and teff sound like posh children's names but have impressive nutritional stats'

one piece of fruit at any point during a workout day. This is in addition to the portion of low-carb fruit featured on the Anytime list of foods, and to your post-workout meal with carbohydrates. **BREAD MADE WITHOUT WHEAT** Rye bread and other good wheat-free varieties are permitted.

The 21 Day Blast Plan by Annie Deadman (HarperCollins) is available for £18.99 at books.telegraph.co.uk

Annie will be a panelist at The Telegraph's 'New

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get my website off the ground, when one day, completely out of the blue, I get a text from a friend saying I was in the paper! I couldn't believe it."

Book publishers came calling shortly after, perhaps spying a gap in the market and, indeed, if that was their motive, I'd agree that Deadman is different to most fitness evangelists. A woman in her 50s who has been there, done it, got the T-shirt, she's familiar with the barriers that stop midlifers getting in shape: namely full-on jobs and a busy family life: "so many things get in the way of looking after yourself".

Her eating plan ("it's not a diet, it's about retraining yourself to eat better," she says) is designed with this in mind. It follows a "cook spag bol for the kids, but leave out the pasta for your own meal" ethos. It's high in protein and good fats, low in carbohydrates; plus it's dairy-, sugar- and wheat-free. Caffeine is allowed – one cup a day only.

You follow two simple lists: the first is a (long) checklist of ingredients you can eat anytime; the second, a list of carbs you can add to the first meal you have after a workout (both lists below). There's no calorie counting or weighing out of ingredients.

The most important thing, Deadman stresses straight away, is that you need to follow the whole programme – don't skip the workouts and only do the food bit as there's solid science why this won't work, and vice versa. "Your body needs carbohydrates for energy, but too much of it creates a flood of the hormone insulin that turns it into glucose. If this glucose isn't used up through exercise, it will be stored as fat. Basically you can never tell when your hormones are uneven, but keeping alcohol, caffeine and sugar to a minimum 80 per cent of the time will help with not only fat loss, it will balance out

PUMPING-IRON LADY
Annie Deadman working out in her home gym, above



The postman is probably wishing that he could unsee me star-jumping in my underwear

your hormones so everything works more efficiently."

There's a good reason for the no sugar, dairy and wheat, too: "It's so easy for our brains to become hard-wired to enjoy sweetness and high-processed foods. I'm not saying give up things with added sugars forever, because that's impossible, but to just stick to eating foods which don't fight in the gut for 21 days. See if you can retrain your palate and your eating habits."

And alcohol (the thing I'm least looking forward to giving up)? "It's a toxin. When you drink, the body wants rid of it asap because it's alien to the body's systems. It stops burning fat."

"It's all about retraining yourself and changing your mindset, that's the reason the plan is three weeks – apparently it takes that long to break a habit."

HOW TO MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS, BY ANNIE DEADMAN

SET SOME GOALS

Declaring, "I want to lose some fat" is good. Saying, "I want to be a size 12 again" or, "I want to get into those trousers that have been too tight for three years" is better, because these statements are more measurable and less vague.

WRITE THINGS DOWN

I'm a great believer in getting it out of your head and on to a page. Whether you're a pen and paper, parchment and quill, or finger and phone person, keep a note of how you feel, what food you eat,

when you do your exercise. Don't be tempted to think, 'Oh those 10 almonds don't count'. Yes they do. They count as your snack.

Mindless nibbling is not going to get you into shape. Keep a mood diary too, as well as the food diary. It's about paying closer attention to how you feel.

STRIP OFF AND TAKE SOME PHOTOS
Look, I know it sounds like purgatory, but, really, a

close encounter with one's own flesh (wobble) is the best policy. You are investing effort and time into this and this is where it will show. So get your kit off and either photograph yourself in the mirror or ask a (very good) friend to do it.

MEASURE!

Get a flexible tape measure and measure these parts of your body: chest, tummy, hips, top of thigh and top of arm. Make a

note of those measurements; you will take them again at the end of 21 days and there's nothing like being able to say proudly and with attitude: "I've lost nine-and-a-half inches all over".

DON'T WEIGH YOURSELF

Measure your progress and success by how you look and how things fit but not by how heavy you are. It's a mindset thing. If you absolutely have to weigh, then do it once at the beginning and once at the end.



"Afterwards you don't have to continue doing the workouts or being so strict, but if the plan inspires you to cut down on wine during the week, and maybe start taking out your dog more often, then great!"

So, drumroll, did I lose any weight? I peep at the scales at the beginning of the second week - 7lb!

And then, nothing. By the end of that week... just one more measly pound.

I mention my frustration to Deadman, who doesn't look surprised. "When anyone does any kind of plan you'll probably be reducing your calorie intake in the first week. Your body will look for the stored carbohydrate [glycogen] in your muscles and liver," she explains. "Trying not to be too technical, glycogen is stored together with water, so you'll find yourself weeing a lot. Basically, that first week you're losing water weight."

"People get so hung up about weight and really it's leading you down a no-win path - I prefer to talk about losing fat, not weight. You're toning up muscles, making them heavy. Always measure - not weigh - yourself."

For the record, I find resisting the temptation to hop on the scales one of the hardest things about the plan and I fail, plus there's no tape measure in the house, so I forget to measure myself. But I am happy with my 9lb weight - sorry, fat - loss, and even happier when I find I can fit into a few things I haven't been able to for a year or more.

Thanks to the workouts I feel stronger - and quicker and lighter on my feet. But when it comes to the eating plan, willpower is needed, especially when your desk is like mine and right next to a table where co-workers dump cakes and treats. The first few days you get incredibly tired in the evenings as you adjust to the low carbs, plus you may have a headache as you get sugar and caffeine withdrawal, but providing you eat enough protein, you won't get hungry between meals.

I find cutting out dairy difficult - coconut milk in decaf tea isn't fun (my extensive research found unsweetened Koko milk from Morrisons is the most palatable brand). But the worst bit is the alcohol ban. I end up resorting to an alcohol-free gin and tonic at the end of one fraught Friday, confessing to Deadman the next day. "Ooh, what a good idea," she says, to my surprise.

And then, before I know it, the 21 days comes skidding to an end. I'm dragged kicking and screaming back into normal life, or rather: a boozy girls lunch where it would be rude not to partake in a canapé or five, and real gin - oh, gin, how I've missed you!

The following day I wake up, make a cup of decaf tea, and start making an egg-white omelette before I remember the plan is over and I don't have to.

And this is when it occurs to me: it is no longer about having to, it's now all about wanting to. In my mind, that's mission accomplished.



UPPER BODY & CORE

3 CRAB TOE TOUCHES

This is a great move for the arms, shoulders and core. Sit on the floor with your arms behind you and your feet on the floor. Lift your hips a few inches off the floor, then lift one leg in the air straight and, at the same time, bring your opposite arm (your right arm if your left leg is off the floor) forwards to touch it. Aim for your ankle! Repeat on the other side, keeping your hips off the floor.



4 WALKING PLANK

Get into the plank position, on your forearms, with your body forming a straight line from feet to shoulders. The plan is to go from resting on your forearms to using your hands to push you up. From forearm position, place your right hand where your right elbow is and push up, doing the same with the left arm, just after. Once up, return to the floor in the same way, reversing the move so you end up on your forearms. Alternate with the other arm.



CARDIO EXERCISES

5 MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

Start on the floor with your knees off the floor, and your arms straight, facing down. Drive one knee towards your chest, then swap to the other leg. Try and keep your hips low and your back straight. As you get better at this, you will be able to go faster and faster.



6 SQUAT JACKS

Stand tall with your legs apart and slightly bent. Jump both legs out to the side and then back, in and out (like the bottom half of a star jump, but keeping them slightly bent all the time). For a lower-impact version, tap one leg out to the side at a time.

others. Be mindful of any sugar content. **FRUIT** You are permitted



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