



Sultry sweats

The pole dancing fitness craze has women learning new moves *by Michelle Garcia* Oct 17, 2006
Forget the free weights and yoga mats -- the newest fitness craze has women swinging around a vertical metal pole and learning stripper's moves to get fit.

Like many a fad, fitness or otherwise, the pole dancing for fitness phenomenon began in Hollywood with celebrities like Kate Moss, Pamela Anderson and Teri Hatcher swearing by the pole dance and Hollywood hottie Carmen Electra putting out her own strip aerobics workout DVDs.

Though the trend has filtered into mainstream fitness, there are still many women reluctant to tackle the pole. Krista Knee, co-owner of [Flirty Girl Fitness](#) says she hears stories of women who have surfed their website for weeks before walking through the door.

Knowing that not every woman is willing to jump right on the pole, Flirty Girl and other fitness centres offering sexy fitness routines try to make women as comfortable as possible. No men are allowed in classes and in spite of the association with strippers, women don't take off their clothing. The bright, chic atmosphere at Flirty Girl with pink paint and butterflies adorning the walls, chandeliers hanging from the ceiling and locker rooms complete with blow driers and hair products are an effort to make women feel welcome.

To ease them into the workout, an introductory class is recommended for those who have never tackled the pole before so you know you're in a room full of beginners, Knee says.

Timidly walking into a dance studio spotted by floor to ceiling metal poles, women usually begin with some typical stretches before working the poles into the routine. After a few bumps and bruises on their first encounter, which usually involves grabbing on, hooking your feet around the pole and spinning around the pole (or the fireman spin), many women get hooked.

For those who may not necessarily be as comfortable with the pole, other sexy workouts like strip aerobics, lap dancing and Coyote Ugly dancing are also available. No matter which sexy workout you choose, the emotional benefits are apparent even after the first lesson. "Your self esteem goes through the roof," Knee says.

Developed for women by women, classes at [Aradia Fitness](#) -- another fitness centre specializing in pole and sensual dancing -- focuses on areas important to women like the stomach and hips. Though pole dancing is recommended to women of all shapes and sizes, participants need to be able to lift their own body weight up on the pole, giving the arm muscles quite a workout.

But it's not usually the muscle being worked or calories burned that draws women to this type of fitness. Aradia Fitness co-owner Christine Boyer says it's a fun alternative to running on a treadmill. "I felt like a kid swinging around on the monkey bars again," she says.

In spite of the great workout, it's the increased sex appeal that causes many women to sign up for these classes. "Women want an excuse to feel sexy," says [Laura Furtado](#), a strip aerobics instructor in the GTA. Though she teaches at different dance studios, she also does classes at Caddy's Strip bar. Average women get the "whole experience" by taking over the bar during light

hours before the real strippers get to work.

Currently, the business of adding a bit of sexiness to a workout is booming. Flirty Girl is opening a new location in Chicago. Furtado's classes are expanding throughout the region and Aradia is also expanding to more than a dozen locations across Canada and a few in the United States.

And, though Hollywood fads come and go, sexuality and fitness will always be a winning combination. "Women are always going to need fitness," Boyer says. "They'll always want to feel good about themselves." She goes on to say that even if strip aerobics and pole dancing go out of style, dancing and being sexual will always be something women will want to do.