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The muscle toner: Reviber Plus vibration trainer

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Madonna's fiercely toned limbs are said to come courtesy of regular sessions on a Power Plate – a vibrating exercise machine that you stand on to give muscles an intensive work-out by forcing them to relax and contract at high speed. The Reviber vibration trainer works on much the same principle, claiming that short periods of regular use will hone muscle tone, improve core strength and increase circulation and metabolism.

As a devotee of the minimum effort/maximum result school of exercise, Dr F was pretty excited about this machine and, while it doesn't feel as hi-tech as the Power Plate devices she has used before (at £20 a pop, mind you), it did deliver impressive results. The simplest way to use the Reviber is simply to crank up it up to a speed you feel comfortable with (it has 15 settings, although they recommend you don't use it above 10 if you are unsupervised) and just stand on it with your knees slightly bent and your core muscles tensed for up to 10 minutes. If you want to give your upper body a work-out, you can attach the resistance bands to each side for arm curls and torso twists.

If it all sounds a bit easy, that's because it is. Your muscles do feel as if they are working pretty hard to maintain your balance and you will feel it the next day, but it's still preferable to doing innumerable squats and lunges. One of Dr F's assistants even reckons that, regardless of the Reviber's toning capabilities, the trauma of feeling every ounce of flesh on your body wobble at high speed is enough to steer you off the pudding menu for life.

After only three weeks' use, Dr F found that her core abdominal muscles (which had really gone to seed after she pulled the plug on her own personal-training sessions) were tighter and her knees were starting to look ever so slightly less like Cornish pasties. Result!

Prescription Effective, easy to use and excellent value for money. Throw in a few cardio sessions of your own making (jogging, cycling, dancing, whatever) and you have yourself a nice little regime sans monthly gym payments.