

## **IF THE BUGS DON'T GET YOU THE EQUIPMENT MIGHT.**

Most people enrol in gymnasia and health clubs purportedly to improve their fitness and well-being; others seem to treat the gym more as a social club whilst others may use the facility as a means of avoiding some irksome household duty.

But is physical or social health the only product of the health club/gymnasia?

A report from the Georgia (USA) Technological College indicates otherwise. It appears that a "one size fits all" attitude pervades many fitness establishments. Little or no effort is made to advise clients as to the advisability of adjusting equipment so that it is appropriate to the individual be they slim, thin, slight, sturdy or simply grossly obese. Staff were found to make little or no effort to ensure that the clients obtained appropriate guidance and benefit from their workouts and that helping adjust equipment was often regarded as being outside the scope of their duties.

Bacterial and hygiene matters are of relative little consequence inside the exercise room, it is the equipment or rather the failure to ensure that the equipment is correctly used that is the cause of many a physical injury. The exercise cycle is item that is most likely to cause problems for the user. For instance a "too low seat" cramps the legs or a "too high seat" requiring undue stretching and tip toe pedalling can cause serious leg injuries including ruptured Achilles Tendons. Having to grip the handlebars too tightly or using a machine that causes a rounded back can both cause serious back injuries.

Weight lifting is another exercise that is very prone to injury particularly if the technical advice is sparse or non-existent. Finger injuries are the most frequent and lower back injuries, particularly prolapsed discs the most serious and the most easily caused by trying to lift too much too soon or without adequate experience or professional supervision.

Taking part in guided exercise classes can seem pretty harmless but if the leader is not qualified to take such a class then it can become a substantial hazard. (and there must be insurance implications in such a situation). Even Bikram yoga classes, which by their nature are gentle can cause problems particularly if being taken in a room in which the temperature is too high. This can cause the participants to push themselves too hard with adverse results.

The moral: Check that the equipment you are going to use is comfortable, if not – get the staff to adjust it. Check your trainer's training and experience. Qualification certificates are often on display. If not why not? This may tell you something about the establishment. Ask! unqualified staff should not be supervising exercise activities, and

Finally take the exercises at your own pace don't accept pressure to work at the speed of your class. Work at your own pace, do not feel it necessary to keep up with your super-fit class leader or even your fitter classmates.