

WELCOME  
TO... 

# DIET BOOT CAMP

**G**HISLAINE HOWARD is panting as she clammers up the steep, rocky path. It's 1.30pm on the third day of a week-long diet boot camp and she's ready for a break — and food.

Thankfully, the course leaders call a halt, and pull packed lunches from their knapsacks. The only thing the hikers have eaten since breakfast is a handful of seeds, and they are ravenous.

But they're in for a disappointment. As Ghislaine says: 'Guacamole, tomato salad and oatcakes are hardly what you want to eat when you're halfway up a mountain and still have to make it to the top. What I want is a stodgy sandwich and a hot flask of tea.'

Lack of willpower is the undoing of many people's good intentions to get fit. But at The Camp, you're not allowed to fall off the path to health and weight loss.

'Move on, ladies,' the sergeant-major type barks at the hikers as they swallow the last crumbs of oatcake. 'You can do it.'

The organisers of The Camp promise that, with their regime of healthy eating and exercise, you can drop a dress size in a week. Is this health boot camp the answer for impatient dieters?

The Camp, based at a listed building in a 3,000-acre estate in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, is run by a team of former soldiers who are also qualified fitness instructors. Leading them is former British Army adventure training officer Sam Costello.

Together with clinical nutritionist Helena Oades, the team has devised a programme of diet and exercise for rapid weight loss. The combination is vital, explains Dr Richard Simpson, a lecturer in exercise physiology at Napier University, Edinburgh, who is an adviser for the course.

'To lose weight and maintain weight loss, diet must be combined with exercise, since you need not only to take in fewer calories, but expend more energy.'

The exercise programme is designed to burn fat (unlike crash dieting, which merely leads to water loss). 'Exercise must be low to moderate,' says Dr Simpson.

'If we exercise at a high intensity, such as running fast, the body uses emergency stores of carbohydrate for fuel and fat is burned more slowly. When we exercise at a moderate level, we use up more fat.'

The Camp's programme is structured around eight-and-a-half-hours a day of constant low-intensity — 'fat burning zone' — exercise. For the first few days, this includes star jumps and power walking — morning, afternoon and evening. Participants burn calories and build up stamina for the 'challenges' later in the week, which include abseiling and mountain-biking.

JUST how hard each woman has to exercise to burn fat depends on her working heart rate. This is the rate at which the blood is pumped round the body during moderate exercise.

To calculate this, you subtract your age plus 10 from 180 (for instance, someone who is 50 would have a fat-burning rate of 120).

To help the participants stick to their rate, they have to wear monitors — whenever the heart rate deviates from its ideal working rate for that person, the monitor beeps. In the evenings, gentler exercise, such as 'seated' yoga, improves flexibility.

Meals at The Camp are tailored to provide the right amount of calories and nutrients. 'This is not a starvation programme,' says Helena.

'It isn't about restricting calorie intake below normal levels, but providing the right type of calories (a balance of carbohydrates, fats and proteins) and increasing

Rock climbing, biking and hiking for eight hours a day — with only nuts to nibble. It's diet hell ...but is it worth the pain?

energy expenditure so that calories are used more effectively.'

We all know that crash diets deprive the body of essential nutrients such as vitamins and iron. They also don't work, as Dr Frankie Phillips a dietician with the British Dietetic Association, explains: 'They cause the body to go into "starvation mode".'

'You don't lose fat but glycogen — an energy-giving carbohydrate stored in muscles and the liver — and water. Once you start eating again, the weight piles back on.'

At The Camp the women eat

three meals per day, which contain nutrients such as chromium to balance blood sugar and aid weight loss.

Regular meals provide a constant energy supply. Nutritious snacks, such as seeds and oatcakes, stop blood sugar levels dropping, which can lead to a cravings for sweet foods. Wheat, caffeine and sugary foods are forbidden. The diet is high in protein, vegetables and fruit, but lower in carbohydrate, and there is little fat.

A typical breakfast is porridge sprinkled with cinnamon and

mixed berries. Lunch is oily fish or chicken with a salad, followed by fruit. The evening meal consists of soup, then lean red meat or fish and vegetables.

The women are given lots of leafy green vegetables, such as broccoli, which are rich in B vitamins needed to help the body release energy effectively.

They also have two portions of oily fish a week, as the essential fatty acids these contain help the body metabolise fat.

Participants drink plenty of green tea. This cleanses the body by

encouraging fat cells to be burnt up as a source of fuel.

The Camp is run along military lines — the women are expected to rise at 0540 (military speak for 5.40 am), ready to start the day with exercise at 0600, followed by breakfast at 0645. The day officially ends at 2200.

Participants are treated like new recruits and given orders, although they are encouraged, too.

But can you really eat healthily and drop a dress size in a week? We challenged Ghislaine Howard and two other women to find out...

Pictures: DAVID CRUICKSHANKS

**BEFORE: size 14  
NOW: size 12**

**PAULINE DRYSDALE, 40, runs a catering service with her husband Douglas, 40. The couple live in Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland, with their daughters, Phoebe, eight, and Poppy, six. At 5ft 10in, Pauline weighed 11st 7lb at the beginning of the week; she now weighs 11st. She says:**



I'VE ALWAYS tried to stay in shape, but recently I've found it hard. I play tennis, go for walks with my dog and love skiing and snowboarding. But working in catering, I'm exposed to temptation.

To compound the problem, I've been diagnosed with hypothyroidism. This means my thyroid gland does not make enough thyroxine — a hormone that keeps the metabolism working at its correct pace — and so causes weight gain.

I'm pretty fit, so I wasn't anxious about the amount of exercise involved at The Camp and found the heart monitoring fascinating. I had a working rate of 130 and whenever I exercised too slowly and my heart rate dropped the monitor would beep.

It was surprisingly encouraging to have someone shout orders at you. It's easy to give up when you have to rely on self-motivation. But I was upset to find that by midweek I'd lost less than 2lb.

So, to make my body work even harder, I was given 12lb in weight to carry whenever we went out on a walk. It was hard going, gasping for breath while climbing mountains in driving rain. I just kept telling myself that it was worth it to be a size 12.

The food was beautifully prepared, and I rarely felt hungry. Porridge is not my ideal start to the day, but I was amazed how filling it was.

I was thrilled when I found I had lost half a stone at the end of the week. My skin was also glowing. The acid test was coming home and buying myself a slinky size 12 dress for my husband's surprise 40th birthday party.

I hope I've learned enough about diet and exercise to ensure I can wear it for a long time to come.

**BEFORE: size 12  
NOW: size 10**

**NICOLE LOVE, 24, an account manager, lives in Scubridgeworth, Hertfordshire. At 5ft 8in, she weighed 10st 6lb; she now weighs 10st 2lb. She says:**



BEFORE going to The Camp, the only exercise I took was walking to the train station each day. I'd typically grab junk food at my desk and go out to dinner several times a week. As a result, my weight had been creeping up.

I was so unfit that the first few days at The Camp were hell. We'd be taken power-walking through the woods, punctuated by stops to do press-ups. We were always on the move, exercising for almost nine hours a day.

I was floundering to keep up but I'm quite a determined person and forced myself to keep up. The instructors laughed when we asked them to shout even more at us to force us to keep on the move!

Even when we had lectures about nutrition and fitness we had to sit on exercise balls to keep our muscles working.

Wearing a heart monitor spurred me on. My working heart rate was 144 beats per minute and I was so determined to work hard that I kept

exceeding it. However, our instructor reminded me that by going out of my fat-burning zone I was burning more carbohydrate than fat, so I had to slow down a bit.

Sometimes I felt tearful — perhaps because I wasn't having any sugar, caffeine and starchy carbs, though I suppose I was exhausted, too. But after getting halfway through the week, I told myself there were only a few more days left.

By the end, I looked so much better and felt toned. It was enough to get me into that all-important size 10.

I've taken lots of good tips away with me. Now I have mixed seeds on the train to kick-start my metabolism and a bowl of porridge at work, which keeps me full all morning. When I eat out I order high-protein meals such as lean red meat and vegetables.

The Camp isn't the place to lose masses of weight, but I feel better than I have in months. On the day I arrived home I even pulled out my bike, which hasn't been used in years, and went on a long ride.

**BEFORE: size 14  
NOW: size 12**

**GHISLAINE HOWARD, 52, an artist, lives in Derbyshire with her husband Michael, 52. The couple have two children. At 5ft 3in, Ghislaine weighed 10st 7lb at the beginning of the week; she now weighs 10st 2lb. She says:**



I'VE NEVER had a serious weight problem but I have always found it hard to resist the wrong foods. I love bread with lashings of butter and cheese. My weight was pretty consistent — between 9st 7lb and 10st — until I turned 50, and the pounds started to creep on. It wouldn't come off, and accumulated round my middle.

I hated carrying this extra weight and wanted to get rid of it.

On the first morning it was hard to get up and do circuit training for 45 minutes without even a cup of tea. I have about six cups a day at home and the lack of caffeine gave me terrible headaches at the start of the week.

Although I was never starving on the course, I was always dissatisfied. By day four, I was still balking at the handful of seeds being offered to us as an afternoon snack.

It helped that the day was broken up into short physical exercise sessions, longer activities such as orienteering, and safety and nutrition classes. This stopped me from getting bored or frustrated.

By the fourth day I was ready to try abseiling down an 80ft cliff — which was terrifying and exhilarating.

Overall, the food was nice, though I loathed the breakfast. Porridge made with water is awful.

By the end of the week I was thrilled that I'd lost 5lb. But when my husband came to pick me up, it wasn't my weight loss he noticed, but my posture. There had been several sessions of yoga throughout the week and this must have helped the way I carried myself.

Before I went to The Camp, I bought myself a pair of size 12 black trousers. I was determined to get into them when I finished the course. I felt like Cinderella when I pulled up the zip and they fitted perfectly. But I know I'm going to have to keep up the healthy eating and exercise if I want it to stay that way.

■ A SEVEN-DAY fully-inclusive stay at The Camp costs £1,495. For more details, call 0870 0332375 or e-mail enquiries@thecamp.co.uk.

ANGELA EPSTEIN