It’s 5.30pm on a Monday, and you’re staring at the back of a flabby, vest-wearing guy with rogue body hair. He’s sweating, quietly swearing and checking his watch impatiently while eying the cardio machines. Vest man is third in the queue for the treadmill, and it’s going to be a while before he starts pounding the moving tape. That makes you fourth. Ironically, after the manic traffic rush to get to the gym, you’re feeling more stressed than ever. Artlessly, you and people are waiting their turn for benches and dumbbells or are being herded into classics. This is meant to be your release valve, your escape from your desk and ill health. The reality’s more like canned exercise; an expensive routine that deals with symptoms of a bad lifestyle and not the source.

Now, take a look at Mike Fitch, this issue’s cover model. He’s the guy doing the perfect handstand push-up with a view over Llandudno. He doesn’t deal with queues, membership fees, recycled air, exercise boredom or those people who flex in the mirror. Fitch trains outdoors using his body weight as resistance, and he’s never going to be rid of his brand of workout. The good news: You don’t need to be a model or personal trainer to do this – you too can swap the queues for sunshine and bird sounds. Even better, you could end up looking like the guy. Turn over for a look at the evolution of exercise.

THE EVOLUTION OF exercise

Break your routine, and your limits, with this take-anywhere body-weight training plan

BY ARTHUR JONES • PHOTOGRAPHS BYRON KEULEMANS
Itch takes his father, a serious health fanatic, and has been strength training from the age of 15. Together, they built their own basement gym as, even in those days, they wanted to exercise on their own terms. Through research and attending the advice of non-conformist trainers, Fitch built up his exercise vocabulary of kettlebell, powerlifting, gymnastics, hand-balancing, capoeira, parkour movements and even some break-dancing. He was faddish only on the heavy metal of dumbbells and barbells, and started searching for fitness truths in other exercise disciplines. He also focused on nutrition, trying new diets and finding the best foods for him. He even gave himself a 50-pound challenge (22.6kg), where he purposefully added the weight just to find the best ways to lose it.

This constant search for the perfect fitness formula motivated him to become a personal trainer: looking after everyone from professional athletes to a 90-year-old gyn who had broken her hip. After 15 years of personal training and sampling everything he could find in fitness, he created the Global Bodyweight Training system, or GBT (read more at www.globalbodyweighttraining.com), which is a mash-up of the best parts of different fitness disciplines around the world. The most powerful benefit to this training method is that it can work for everyone, from seven-digit income athletes to your grandmother.

The effectiveness of the GBT plan (and bodyweight training in general) is something called “neural adaptation,” where your body is forced to adapt and improve to the challenges you place on it. “In GBT you’ll start with a simple push-up or pull-up and eventually progress to a single arm push-up, which requires an incredible amount of strength as well as total body stabilisation,” says Fitch. “This is because there is that high neuro demand where more muscles are working to perform a given task, which results in more oxygen being used and more lactic acids being built.”

The Benefits of Bodyweight Training

1. It can be done anywhere. Fitch shows you how to use almost anything as a weight, literally: chairs, fridge doors, kettlebells, even a leg extension machine. But unlike kettlebells, standard weights and plates, you are bodyweight training, without any fancy gym equipment before you. “Even the wind is free,” says Fitch. “Moving without fancy gym equipment is something I’ve learned to love.”

2. It requires minimal equipment. “You can start with nothing but your own body,” says Fitch. “Build up to simple tools, like a parallette, or gymnastic rings, or a pull-up frame.”

3. It is efficient. Fitch believes that the key to efficient training is to work only on key muscle groups. “You can get an effective workout if you train the areas you are weak in, and support those areas you are strong in,” says Fitch. “Parallettes are an efficient tool to use and you can learn how to make your own GBT website.

4. This training is totally functional. “Your body, hand or foot weight is your weight,” says Fitch. “This means you’re isolating single muscles.” How does this work? You simply need to isolate the muscle you want to work on by moving your body around it. If you are sitting in a chair, then sit up and engage different muscles. “You’re isolating muscles, and you’re engaging other muscles,” says Fitch. “Isolating strength training is the key to efficient training.”

5. It is sustainable. Fitch says sustainability is what you need in your fitness routine. “You need to be able to develop your body and not get bored,” says Fitch. “Parallettes are an efficient tool to use and you can learn how to make your own GBT website.

6. This training is totally functional. “Your body, hand or foot weight is your weight,” says Fitch. “This means you’re isolating single muscles.” How does this work? You simply need to isolate the muscle you want to work on by moving your body around it. If you are sitting in a chair, then sit up and engage different muscles. “You’re isolating muscles, and you’re engaging other muscles,” says Fitch. “Isolating strength training is the key to efficient training.”

7. It is sustainable. Fitch says sustainability is what you need in your fitness routine. “You need to be able to develop your body and not get bored,” says Fitch. “Parallettes are an efficient tool to use and you can learn how to make your own GBT website.

8. How effective is the GBT plan? The percentage of people you can improve your attention span and memory skills if you choose to walk in a natural outdoor environment versus on urban one.

9. Stress Decrease

In a study done by the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Science in Zurich, they found that people going outdoors for physical activity experience a decrease of their stress hormones and a decrease in muscle stiffness. “This is broken down into two workouts, upper and lower body, which you should perform at least twice a week. Do three circuits of 12 to 15 reps of each exercise with good form, then rest for 60 seconds in-between each circuit.

1. Pushup

- Balance your weight on your toes and paws, with your hands slightly beyond shoulder-width apart, tucked into a slight hunch in the floor, pause and push yourself back up.

2. Rent

- Using your “O” rings, suspend yourself so that your feet are on the floor and your arms are straight above you. Pull your upper body towards the sky using your back muscles until your arms make a 90-degree angle. Then slowly lower yourself back down to the start. If you don’t have “O” rings, you can do this as a high-side pull-up using a handrail that’s over flat land, same movement as with the rings.

3. Jump chin-up

- Find a sturdy, rope, or short rope that you can use for chin-ups. Practice yourself below the bar, and jump upwards. Use the momentum of the jump to lift your own body to the bar, taking it with your paws facing away from you. Slowly return to the start.

4. Shoulder press

- Flex your feet and straighten your arms at the same time, and then favourable to raise your arms above your head and slightly above the height of your head. Lower your arms down to the sides of your body, flexing your feet and bending your arms. Do this until you feel comfortable and are able to do so, then repeat it after changing sides.

5. Squat

- Stand with your legs in line with your hips and your arms raised slightly above your head. Lower your knees until your knees reach 90 degrees, bring your feet back to where they were and stand straight again. Continue in front of your own body and repeat this movement.

6. Deadlift

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your back pressed against the wall. Start by pointing your toes 30 degrees towards the floor. Squat down until your knees make a 90-degree angle, pushing your hips back on an imaginary line that’s about halfway between your feet. Do this movement with a flat or slightly rounded back. Your weight should be in the toes with a slight lift of the toes off the ground. Return to the start by extending your legs so that your toes lift your hips back up to the start position.
The Benefits of Bodyweight Training 

1. It can be done anywhere. It should be added to your regular routine. 

2. No need for equipment. You can use your own body weight and gravity as leverage, which means that gravity makes you work harder, says Fitch. Don't be fooled if you can't do the moves outlined in this article, which can take months of training. The more you train, the easier it will get.

3. Increased flexibility. The exercises are designed to improve your flexibility and decrease stress, which can cause back pain, and can also be used as a form of therapy. 

4. You can do it for any goal. You can increase your strength and endurance, or you can increase your flexibility. 

5. Upper body strength. The exercises are designed to work your upper body, which can help you to improve your posture and balance.

6. Lower body strength. The exercises are designed to work your lower body, which can help you to improve your balance and stability.

7. Total body strength. The exercises are designed to work your entire body, which can help you to improve your overall fitness.

8. Personal training. The exercises are designed to be done by yourself, but you can also hire a personal trainer to help you.

9. A great way to challenge yourself. The exercises are designed to be challenging, but they can also be modified to suit your needs.

10. A great way to improve your overall fitness. The exercises are designed to improve your overall fitness, as well as your strength and endurance.

Warm-up and Warm-down

Do the exercises in the order shown, without resting. This routine not only gets your blood flowing, warms your muscles and improves your mobility, but it also ensures that you perform your best during the actual workout.

1. Jog for 5 minutes. This will warm up your back and forearms on your run. You can also use any form of cardiovascular exercise to warm up.

2. High knees. Run for 50m while raising your knees as high as you can. This will increase your heart rate and ready your muscles for the workout.

3. Power skips. Skip for 50m, but lift your knees as high as you can, and repeat.

4. Side shuffle. Shuffle to the left by moving one foot and then the other. Once you've gone 50m, switch over and repeat on your right.

Once you have completed the workout, do some stretching. Stretching is extremely important, not only for injury prevention, but also for improving your overall performance, says Fitch. “If a muscle is too tight, it can decrease the amount of power it can generate.” The man instability caused? Sitting at a desk all day, looking at a computer screen. This usually leads to tight hip flexors, which can cause back pain, then the upper body, we get tight chest and neck muscles.”

5. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

6. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

7. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

8. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

9. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

10. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

11. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

12. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

13. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

14. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

15. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

16. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

17. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

18. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

19. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

20. The percentage of time we spend at desks is a risk factor for injuries. “A lot of people who spend a lot of time at desks are suffering from upper back pain,” says Fitch. “And even more people who spend long hours at the computer are suffering from lower back pain.”

Immunity Increase

In a study by the Fipnon Medical School in Japan, one group of men spent three days and two nights in a forest and, before that, the same amount of time in a city. The researches then analysed the men’s blood. The results: forest time, but not city time, not only boosted immunity by increasing the number and activity of natural killer cells and related anti-cancer proteins. These changes persisted for at least a week. The researchers suggest that phytochemicals and stress-hormone levels might be contributing to the effect.

Stress Decrease

In a study done by the Centre for Organisational and Occupational Sciences in Munich, in a group of people who went outdoors for physical activity experience a decrease of their stress levels as they arrived at their outdoor exercise location - even before starting their exercises.

Wobble chair press

1. Start in a sitting position with your knees bent, feet placed flat on the floor, and your back supported by the back of the chair.

2. Slowly lower your body back to the floor, pause and push yourself back up.

3. Move your “O” rings, suspended from a window or door frame, so that your feet are at hip level and your knees are bent at a 90-degree angle. Then slowly lower yourself back to the start. If you don’t have “O” rings, try using a plastic bottle with sand and do best one, single arm rows. This exercise can also be done as a hip-high pull-up instead of a standard pull-up.

Push-up

1. Balance your weight on your toes and palms, with your hands slightly beyond shoulder-width apart.

2. Using your “O” rings, suspended from the window, place one hand on the floor and the other hand on your “O” rings, which you can buy at any sporting goods retailer.

3. Once you have completed the workout, stand facing it, placing one hand on the steering wheel and, at times, on the floor.

4. Stand in front of a television or mirror, behind a computer screen, or in front of a doorway.

5. Stand facing it, placing one hand on the steering wheel and, at times, on the floor.

Deadlift

1. Start by standing with your feet shoulder-width apart and your toes pointed outward. 

2. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

3. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

4. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

5. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

6. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

7. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

8. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

9. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

10. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

11. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

12. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

13. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

14. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

15. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

16. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

17. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

18. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

19. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.

20. Stand with your back against the wall and your hands on your hips, then bend forward at the waist and touch your toes.
• Perform three circuits of 10 to 12 reps of each exercise with good form, and break for 60 seconds in-between each circuit.

**Intermediate**

**Upper body**

1. **Jump step**
   
   Start with one foot planted on a raised platform, the other foot is directly in front of you. Lift your body up towards the wall, extend your arm to clasp the wall. Return to the start position, do eight reps on both legs.

2. **Spiderman jump squat**
   
   Start in a crouching position with your right hand flat on the floor and your right foot placed on a raised platform. Do eight reps on both legs.

3. **Behind the back clap pushup**
   
   Start in a push-up position, then lower yourself as you would in a normal push-up. Push upwards explosively so that you lift your toes high enough to stop your body from touching the floor. Keep your body flat, and then lower yourself back to the start position, do three circuits of six to eight reps of each exercise with good form, and break for 60 seconds in-between each circuit.

4. **Wall handstand pushup**
   
   Find a sturdy wall, and then perform a handstand position so that your feet are supported by the wall. In a controlled and slow movement, lower your body, head and shoulders towards the floor. When you head is almost touching, push back up to the start.

**Lower body**

1. **Lateral step down**
   
   Use the same technique as with the basic set-up, but in this case, turn your body so that you are stepping down and up sideways.

2. **Scissor step**
   
   Start in a lunge position with your left foot forwards. In one explosive movement, jump into the air and switch your legs in mid-air so that you land in a squat position with your right foot in front of you. Do eight reps on both legs.

3. **Pistol squat**
   
   For this squat, you need to keep one leg straight out in front of you as you lower your body into a complete squat on one leg. Hold your arms out in front to help you balance. Complete eight reps on both legs.

4. **Jump lunges**
   
   Start in a lunge position with your left foot forwards. In one explosive movement, jump into the air and switch your legs so that you land in a lunge position with your right leg forwards.

5. **Single-leg dead lift**
   
   In the start position, lift your right foot off the floor and hold your arms out in front of you. Lower your torso towards the ground while extending your right leg behind you and leaning forwards. Return to the start position. Do eight reps, then swap legs.

---

**Advanced**

**Upper body**

1. **Claw the back**
   
   Start in a push-up position, and then lower yourself as you would in a normal push-up. Push upwards explosively so that you lift your toes high enough to stop your body from touching the floor. Keep your body flat, and then lower yourself back to the start position.

2. **Front-lever tuck row**
   
   Using your “O” rings again, suspend yourself so that your back is facing the floor, your knees are tucked towards the sky using your back and arm muscles until your arms form a 90-degree angle. Lower yourself slowly back to the start.

3. **Handstand pushup**
   
   Use the exact same move as the basic chin-up, but, in this case, you don’t use a wall for support. Push upwards explosively so that you lift your toes high enough to stop your body from touching the floor. Keep your body flat, and then lower yourself back to the start position.

4. **L-sit chin-up**
   
   Use a wall for support. Place your left hand and feet against the wall. In a controlled and slow movement, lower your body, head and shoulders towards the floor. When you head is almost touching, push back up to the start.

**Lower body**

1. **Jump step**
   
   Start with one foot planted on a raised platform, the other foot is directly in front of you. Lift your body up towards the wall, extend your arm to clasp the wall. Return to the start position, do three circuits of six to eight reps of each exercise with good form, and break for 60 seconds in-between each circuit.

2. **Pistol squat**
   
   For this squat, you need to keep one leg straight out in front of you as you lower your body into a complete squat on one leg. Hold your arms out in front to help you balance. Complete eight reps on both legs.

3. **Jump lunges**
   
   Start in a lunge position with your left foot forwards. In one explosive movement, jump into the air and switch your legs so that you land in a lunge position with your right leg forwards.

4. **Single-leg dead lift**
   
   In the start position, lift your right foot off the floor and hold your arms out in front of you. Lower your torso towards the ground while extending your right leg behind you and leaning forwards. Return to the start position. Do eight reps, then swap legs.
**Upper body**

1. **Push-up with alternating lifts**
   - Start in the normal push-up position. As you push upwards, lift your right hand and right leg off the floor, and then lower to the start. Do 15 reps of lifts on both sides.

2. **Elevated row**
   - Do the exact same move as in the basic row technique, except that in this case your feet need to rest on an elevated platform throughout the exercise.

3. **Climber’s chin-up**
   - Once you get a good technique that you can use for chin-ups, pull yourself up towards one hand and lower, then pull up towards the other hand. Return to the start. That’s one rep.

4. **Wall handstand push-up**
   - Find a sturdy wall, and then get into a handstand position so that your feet are supported by the wall. In a controlled and slow movement, lower your body and head towards the floor. When you head is almost touching, push back up to the start.

**Lower body**

1. **Lateral step-down**
   - Use the same technique as with the basic set-up, but in this case, your feet need to rest on an elevated platform throughout the exercise.

2. **Spiderman jump squat**
   - Start in a crouch position, with your right hand flat on the floor and your left extended behind you to help balance. As you push through your heels, jump up explosively so high enough to clamp your hands above your head. Lower yourself slowly back to the start.

3. **Multi-directional lunges**
   - For these lunges, imagine you are standing in the middle of an imaginary clock face. For this exercise, you will be stepping out to each number of the clock face, but while stepping facing forwards (towards “12” on the clock). Start at “12” by stepping your right foot forwards, and swap legs when you hit “6” on the images. Fitch is showing a lunge out towards the number “3”.

4. **Straight-leg dead lift**
   - Use the same technique as with the basic dead lift, but in this case, aim to keep a slight bend in your lower back and hips.

**Advanced**

1. **Jump step**
   - Start with one foot planted on a raised platform, the other foot placed on a raised platform, the opposite foot now on the floor. As you do a jump step, you need to keep one leg high enough to clamp your hands above your head. Lower yourself slowly back to the start.

2. **Pistol squat**
   - Start in a squat position, with the opposite leg flat on the floor. As you do a jump step, you need to keep one leg high enough to clamp your hands above your head. Lower yourself slowly back to the start.

3. **Handstand push-up**
   - Follow the exact same technique as the wall push-up but, in this case, you don’t use a wall for support. Keep your hands flat on the floor. Push up explosively so that you lift your torso high enough to clamp your hands above your head. Lower yourself slowly back to the start.

4. **L-sit chin-up**
   - Use a wall for support. Using your “O” rings again, suspend yourself so that your body is supported by the wall. In a controlled and slow movement, lift your body until your arms are holding your weight. Lift your body towards the sky using your back and arm muscles until your arms form a 90-degree angle, lower yourself slowly back to the start.

5. **Jump lunge**
   - Start in a lunge position with your left foot forwards. In one explosive movement, jump into the air and switch your legs in mid-air so that your opposite foot is now on the platform. Do eight reps on both legs.

6. **Single-leg dead lift**
   - In the start position, lift your right foot off the floor and hold your arms out in front of you. Lower your torso towards the ground while extending your right leg behind you and leaning forwards. Return to the start position. Do eight reps, then swap legs.