

Health, beauty & fitness

Ask the pharmacist... giving up smoking

CRAVING a cigarette? Angela Chalmers, Boots' pharmacist from the Holloway Road store answers your health queries.

What causes it? Smoking is one of the biggest contributing factors to death and illness in the UK. People who smoke become addicted to nicotine, the chemical in tobacco. Whether a cigarette, cigar or pipe, the body soon needs hits of nicotine to feel normal. Nicotine takes about seven seconds to reach the brain after a puff on a cigarette, then helps the brain make dopamine, a chemical that helps to make people feel happy. Without nicotine, addicts may have such withdrawal symptoms as feeling sad, anxious, irritable, and restless.

What can I do? Out of every 100 smokers, only five to 10 will succeed in giving up on their own. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

can double the chances of success. NRT products include gum, lozenges, patches and inhalators. Some prescription medicines have also been shown to help. It is best to get help from a GP, pharmacist or clinic to advise on the best treatment.

Products to consider
Nicotinell 24-Hour Patch (step 1): 7-day supply £12.99. Each patch of 52.5mg of nicotine helps you overcome your urge to smoke.
Boots NicAssist 10mg Inhalator Starter Pack (6 pack), £5.80 This product may be helpful for those who miss the frequent hand to mouth movements and inhaling.
Nicorette Fresh Fruit 4mg Gum 30 pack £6.59 Can help you beat the urge to smoke.



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Pucker up and shed the pounds

Get fit with all-action ice hockey

BY DAISY DUMAS

THE world's fastest-paced team sport, ice hockey is not for the faint-hearted. But novices shouldn't be put off – even first-timers can don some skates, grab a stick, get involved and benefit from the work-out, camaraderie and challenge that the sport brings.

Although it was enjoyed by our royalty in the 19th century, ice hockey has since been a minority sport in the UK, but Canadian, American, Russian and Czech (to name a few) expats have helped to keep the game alive and more Britons are now getting to

grips with the thrill of the ice. There are several ice hockey training sessions across London but, as a total beginner, I was assured that the Streatham Chiefs' all-levels night would be a great introduction to the adrenaline (and testosterone) soaked game.

Layering up

LIKE a knight on ice, I pulled on layer after layer of hockey armour – including an oh-so-flattering pelvis protector and a pair of immensely bulky padded shorts that give a whole new meaning to “does my bum look big in this?” That's an understatement. Shin guards, girdles (don't ask), elbow guards, braces, footless socks and helmet all went on, until, eventually, I resembled SpongeBob SquarePants with ice skates.

All of this precautionary armour reminded me that hockey is an aggressive, full-contact sport. Not only are bodychecks (obstructions using the body) allowed, but the puck may also be redirected using nearly any part of the body. Including, it seems, the pelvis. What had I let myself in for?

Testing the ice

I WADDLED on to the ice and was handed a stick. About 5ft long and very light with a “blade” at one end, it was easy to handle, especially as I learnt that it can be used as a sort of crutch, helping me to balance on the ice.

On to the skate. No toe-pick (the jagged teeth at the end of a conventional figure skate) means that they are quick to move in, hard to stop in and very responsive. I'd never skated in hockey boots before – let alone all that unwieldy padding – and soon found myself regretting forsaking skating time at Somerset House in favour of an extra glass of mulled wine.

Jimmy, the small, round, ebullient coach, defied my preconceptions of a typical ice hockey player by managing to glide gracefully and powerfully while being a typical, if not exactly statuesque, London lad.

Ever enthusiastic, Jimmy showed me how to move in the skates and pads. Essentially, it's not too hard – I channelled childhood roller-skating memories – but there was one thing I just couldn't master.

“Aaaagh! I can't stop!” Shrieking wildly while hurtling across the ice, all semblance of control and poise utterly dashed, I headed for the rink's barrier and with a loud smash, Perspex boards connected with plastic helmet and an almighty shaking reverberation



Armoured up: Daisy Dumas is ready for battle

Ice warriors' fact file

● Streatham Ice Arena, 386 Streatham High Street, SW16 (020 8769 7771)
● Streatham Chiefs offer mixed, all-levels training on Thursday evenings 10.45pm, £10, full kit required. chiefs.co.uk

● Women-only training sessions are available with ladies' team Streatham Storm on Monday evenings at 9pm, £10, beginners welcome and full kit supplied. streathamstorm.co.uk

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