What’s spinning? [1]

Dear Alice,

I've been reading about spinning classes in a lot of health magazines. What are they?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Spinning® (it is a registered trademark name when referred to as the exercise) is generically known as indoor, stationary cycling. Originated by Johnny G. (for Jonathan Goldberg, the Spinning guru) in 1987, these high intensity classes have sprung up all over the United States. Although gyms are calling these classes by various other names, most offer similar workouts.

An instructor leads the typically 45 - 60 minute class, usually to some sort of motivating music. Participants ride on specially designed stationary bikes and are able to control their own resistance, or level of difficulty. Some instructors take the class on an imaginary ride, describing changing scenery, such as mountains or flat roads. Other leaders encourage the class through various cycling techniques. Often the music inspires participants to work towards a high level of fitness.

These classes can be very challenging. A good instructor should be able to help beginners adapt the exercises to suit their ability. Since these bicycles are much different than outdoor ones, it takes a few classes to get the feel of them. When trying an indoor cycling class, it is recommended to:

- Arrive early for your first class. If it's your first time, tell the instructor and have him or her help you set up the bike. You need to properly adjust the seat and handlebar heights, as well as the distance between the seat and handlebars.
- Ask the instructor to review proper form. Avoid leaning on the handlebars ? it puts too much pressure on your shoulders and wrists.
- Bring a full bottle of cold water with you, along with a towel ? you'll sweat a lot!
- Go at your own pace ? don't try to "compete" with others. Even if the instructor acts like a drill sergeant, take it easy until you are comfortable with the techniques involved. You will undoubtedly be sore after the first few classes.
- Wear bike shorts or some sort of long shorts or knee-length leggings.
- Have fun and enjoy, but don't overdo it ? overuse training injuries can occur with this activity, as with any other form of exercise.
Happy cycling!

Alice!

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