

SPIN

yourself slim

There's so much fun to be had from hula hooping and you'll be reaping huge – or should that be slim – benefits for your waistline.

WHEN YOU see children running around playing, it's clear they're not thinking about fitness – they're just enjoying themselves while indulging in energetic, natural movement. There's a lot to be said for such a playful approach to keeping fit, and hula hooping is a great example of this. It hardly feels like exercise, yet can burn 100 calories in 15 minutes, while toning you too.

New research is proving just how beneficial hula hooping, using a weighted hoop, can be. Forget the flimsy hoops of your childhood – the heavier ones designed for a workout start at 1.4kg and go up to 2.3kg, meaning your body has to work harder to propel the hoop around. However, it actually feels easier to keep the momentum going than it does when using a lightweight kids' hoop.

ABS-OLUTELY FABULOUS

While many fitness experts say that spot-reducing fat – slimming down just one area of the body – is impossible, researchers at Canada's

University of Waterloo found that using a weighted hoop significantly decreased waistline measurement. In the six-week trial, 14 women were asked to use a weighted hoop for just 15 minutes per day, five days a week. While the women had slightly more fat directly under their skin afterwards – known as subcutaneous fat – their waists were noticeably smaller, by an average of 3.35cm. Experts suggest this is because the visceral fat within

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their abdomens decreased, due to the massaging effect of the hoop combined with the cardio exercise. Visceral fat is difficult to burn and lies deeper inside you than regular subcutaneous fat, crowding vital organs such as your liver and kidneys. So anything that can help shift it is a big bonus.

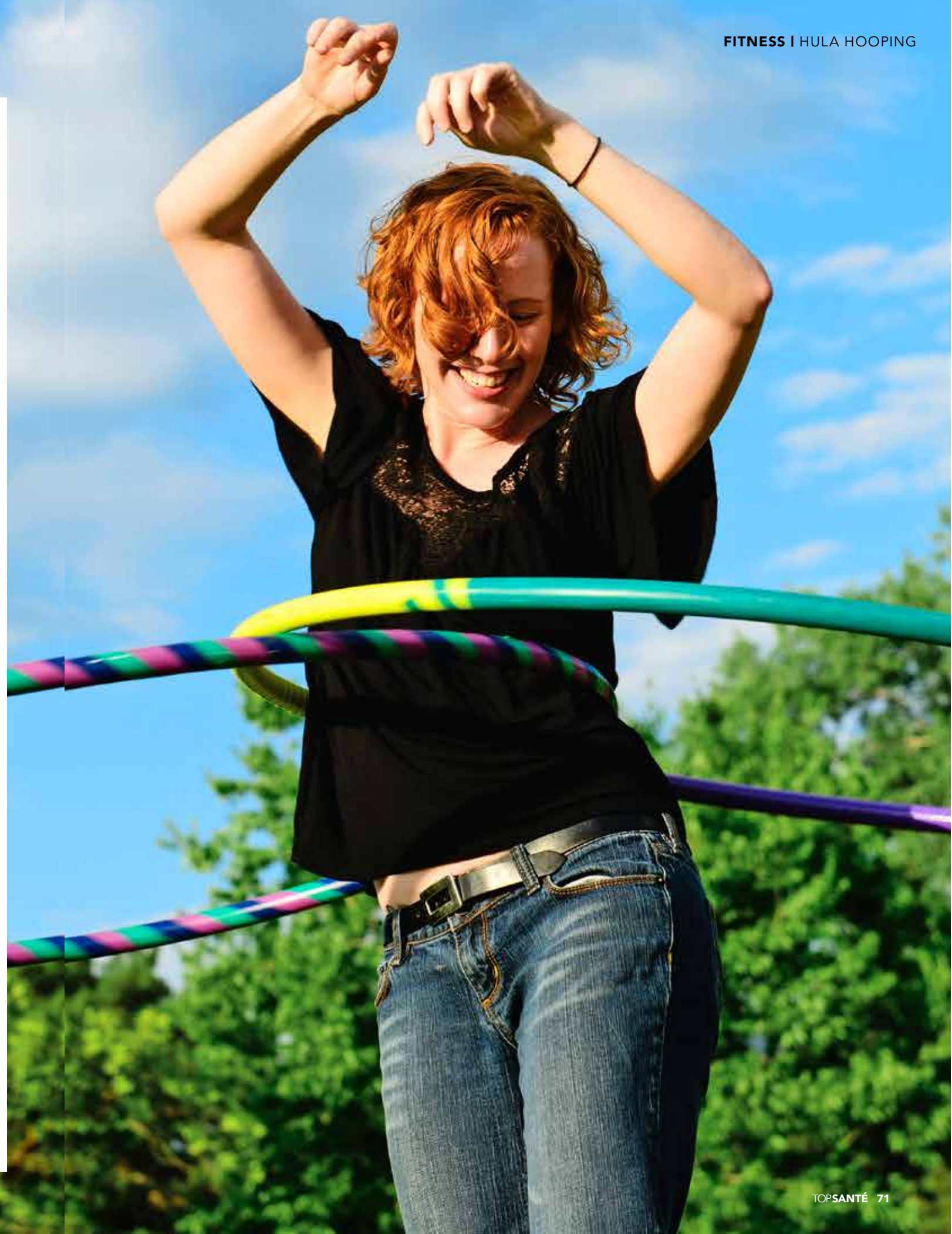
WHAT A WAIST

Louise Mason, a Powerhoop teacher from Norfolk, credits the workout for helping to tighten and tone her stomach and strengthen her back. 'The first fitness benefit you'll

discover is the effect on your core muscles,' she says. While many people associate a slim stomach with sit-ups, they're not the most effective exercise. Sit-ups overuse the rectus abdominis muscle that runs from your pubic bone up to your ribcage. However, the deeper core muscles are often left underused. With a weighted hula hoop, you need to use your entire core to keep it spinning.

Because you're also getting a cardio workout when you're Powerhooping, you'll reduce the layer of fat on top of your abs, for yet more definition – another element that sit-ups alone will not provide. It also keeps your hips flexible and improves balance by encouraging the smaller support muscles on the inside and outside of your thighs to work. Even your pelvic floor benefits from the toning effects of hooping, thanks to the switching on of the stabilising muscles around your core.

In addition, hooping can aid your digestive health – the repetitive compression over your stomach massages your intestines, helping to increase circulation and move food along, to avoid bloating. So get fit, have fun and give it a go!





HOW TO HOOP

Powerhooping delivers serious results in just 15 minutes a day. Our expert, LadyXsize, explains how it's done...

- First of all, remember the acronym 'ASK'. This stands for 'Abs tight, Shoulders back and down, Knees soft'. Once you've got the hoop around your middle, parallel to the floor and in contact with your lower back, adjust your feet so that you've got one foot half a metre in front of the other. Spin the hoop in the direction of the front foot.
- Give the hoop a big shove to get it moving, and remember

that your hips should move forwards and backwards as opposed to side to side. This protects the ligaments inside your knees, which are designed to move forward and backwards. Avoid the temptation to stand with your feet side by side, as this goes against the natural action of the knees.

- Remember to keep your hooping session balanced by changing direction halfway through and swapping which foot you have at the front. Keep your abdominal muscles engaged the whole time.

GET STARTED.

- Begin with a weighted hoop such as the Powerhoop Slim (1.4kg). The hoop can be dismantled in under a minute, for easy storage. It has eight links, which can be reduced to seven for a more aerobic workout, as the hoop spins faster. Get a half-price hoop set for £19 (plus p&p), containing the hoop, instructional DVD and a carry bag, when you use code **LADYXSIZE-TS50%** at ladyxsize.com/shop. You can download a chart from the site's homepage to track your progress.
- There are also online channels that teach techniques – see youtube.com/user/powerhoop.
- Classes take place nationwide. Find one near you at powerhoop.com/map/find-a-class.php.



'HOOPING CONTRIBUTED TO MY 5KG WEIGHT LOSS'

Charlotte Moore, 41, is a copywriter from Stevenage. She started Powerhoop classes as a fun addition to her existing running and Pilates routine.

Taking part in Powerhooping classes certainly challenged my perceptions of hula hooping! During the weekly session we

combine hooping with aerobic moves, using the hoop as a light weight, which makes for a great workout that leaves me tired but happy. I also use my hoop at home once or twice a week for 50

minutes – I hoop during an episode of my favourite TV show! This is ideal for days when the weather's not so good. I've lost 11lb over the past two months through hooping and taking care of my diet. 🍷