

Can DNA-testing be key to making most of training?

MORE TURNING TO SCIENCE TO IMPROVE GYM RESULTS

THINGS have been getting personal in the fitness world for some time now.

Joined a gym in recent years? Then you'll know that along with a quick tour of the facilities, one of the first things you're usually offered is a session with a personal trainer, who'll help you plot your goals and tailor your workouts.

As our interest in health and fitness grows, so too does the industry – the market's now worth about £4.7 billion, up 6.3% from 2016, according to the 2017 State of the UK Fitness Industry Report.

But tailored gym workouts merely skim the surface. There's an ever-expanding realm of tech, apps and online PT programmes, eager to tap into our desire to take a more measured, scientific and personalised approach. And nothing could be more personal and scientific than one of the latest trends: DNA testing.

BY ABI JACKSON

THE FUTURE OF FITNESS?

Dalton Wong, leading celebrity personal trainer and founder of TwentyTwo Training, whose VIP clients include Jennifer Lawrence, Kit Harrington and Alice Eve, says while it's not "the norm" for people to be DNA tested in the name of fitness, he has noticed "more clients are taking a proactive role in finding out what works best for them in regards to health and wellness".

"DNA testing can give you a personalised approach to what foods could best suit you and what types of exercise protocols could work best for your body," he explains.

It's not hard to see the appeal given the 'weekend warrior' boom and soaring sign-up rates for extreme challenges like ultra-marathons and Iron Man, not to mention the #fitspo movements on social media and



SCIENCE: CAN EXPLORING YOUR DNA HELP MAXIMISE EXERCISE BENEFITS?

everybody being time-poor. We want results, and we want them fast.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Based on science developed to help professional athletes maximise their potential, a handful of companies worldwide offer DNA testing for consumers, promising to help them discover the training approach that's best for them, according to their genes.

DNAFit, a rapidly growing UK-based company founded in 2013, provides the same DNA tests to fitness devotees as it does for elite sports teams and athletes on its books (including Greg Rutherford), via home-test saliva swab kits. Once analysed, customers receive a report and infographic outlining the results, plus a consultation to explain what it all means.

Some significant genotype findings can be useful for determining whether an athlete responds better to power or endurance training, their natural VO2 max (how the body uses oxygen during

aerobic activity), whether they're more prone to soft tissue injuries like sprains and strains, and how quickly they recover from exercise.

PART OF THE PICTURE

Any type of genetic testing being sold to consumers raises ethical questions. There are Codes of Practice (tests can't be sold to under-18s, for instance) and confidentiality is vital.

Andrew Steele, the former Olympic athlete who is now DNAFit's head of professional sport and fitness, explains the tests are not meant for talent prediction.

"You couldn't do that anyway," he says, "as so many other factors, including environmental factors and somebody's dedication to training, come into it. These results are just part of a picture that can potentially be very helpful."

Similarly, efforts are made to ensure results aren't interpreted as proof of personal limitations; you can't change your genes, so what if the results are less than glowing?

"It's about giving people the

knowledge and guidance to tailor their approach to fitness in a way that best suits them – things they'd otherwise maybe only learn about themselves after years of trial and error," says Andrew.

It's something that has personal resonance for him. Andrew explains that following the Beijing Games, his hopes of competing at London 2012 had looked promising, but things started to unravel following a string of injuries and a bout of ill health. He now believes, based on what he's subsequently learned about his DNA and the conditions his body best responds to athletically, that switches in his training regime played a part in his declining sprint performances. Ultimately, though, it's about making the most of science, he stresses. The results mean little if people aren't prepared to use them to their advantage.

In other words, if you want to get fit, you'll still need to put the hours in with your training – ensure you rest and recover properly, fuel yourself well and all those other important things.

For more information, visit dnafit.com

“THESE RESULTS ARE JUST PART OF A PICTURE”



Tips... DOS AND DON'TS FOR BUYING MEDICINES ONLINE

WITH more online GP services cropping up and new apps launching to help monitor and manage symptoms, the internet's role in how we look after our health is greater than ever. One of the biggest draws is convenience, enabling us to arrange a check-up or order prescriptions at a time that suits, removing the need to take time off work, traipse to the doctor's surgery and then to the pharmacy, or be caught out by long waiting lists – which is why so many people are willing to pay a few pounds more for the privilege. But easier access to prescription drugs raises safety concerns, too. "Millions of people in the UK use online doctor services

to allow them to have a convenient consultation with a General Medical Council (GMC)-registered doctor over the internet, and then either be sent their prescription in the post or collect it from a local pharmacy," says Dr Kieran Seyan from LloydsPharmacy Online Doctor, one of the first services of its kind to be approved by the UK Government's healthcare regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC). "If you choose a reputable service, then obtaining medicine online is completely safe, but you do need to follow a few basic ground rules." Here, Dr Seyan shares his top dos and don'ts for buying prescription medicine online...

DO BE HONEST
"It is essential for your online doctor to ask you some medical questions during a consultation to ensure the medicine is suitable for you. They need to ask about the symptoms you have and get some background information about your current and past



health. Giving false information can be dangerous as it can lead to unsuitable medication being prescribed."

CONSIDER USING AN ONLINE DOCTOR TO OBTAIN EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

"Online doctors and pharmacies have helped improve access to emergency contraception and it's one example where these services have proven extremely beneficial for patients. A recent study has shown LloydsPharmacy Online Doctor's emergency contraception service has led to a lower rate of unwanted pregnancies (1.3% compared with the national average of 2.5%-6%), largely because of the speed of access and ease of collection from pharmacy."

DON'T SEARCH FOR THE CHEAPEST MEDICINE

"The internet is great when it comes to price comparisons on things like flights and insurance; medicine, however, is a different matter. It is essential you get the correct medicine for you, one that is genuine and safe. If an offer seems too good to be true, then it probably is."

USE THEM FOR A MEDICAL EMERGENCY

"These services are there to provide convenience for today's hectic lives when seeing your own GP can be a challenge, but if you have an urgent medical concern, you must see your own GP or go to A&E."