

Hoop Dynamics: Give HoopFit Exercise Classes a Whirl



About a year ago, Jeanne Lieder had a hoop dream. Instead of just dancing with her favorite circular accessory, she imagined using it for a regimen that integrated other forms of exercise: aerobics, boxing and yoga. Not only does keeping that hoop spinning whittle your middle, but it also takes your mind off of the pain. "By adding the hoop, you add the fun," Lieder says. Maybe that's why so many folks are giving [HoopFit](#) a whirl. We scouted out a class at [Funfit](#) in Derwood, Md., but Lieder offers it at several locations.

» **What It Is:** Just about every group exercise format makes an appearance in the class — but always with a hoop added. You won't start by spinning. Instead, for the warm-up, you'll use it like a ballet barre to keep your balance as you kick your legs up from side to side. Then you'll pick it up for a series of lifts. When it's time to get your hoop circling, don't expect to just stand there for long. You'll lunge and raise your arms so you're in a warrior one pose. Or you'll be punching and pivoting, which will challenge your coordination as much as your cardiovascular capacity. Eventually, you'll cool down and stretch, also using the hoop.



» **Moves:** Haven't hooped since childhood? Lieder can jog your memory about the motion required. "You think it's circular, but it's linear," she reminds, pointing to the two spots on the hip where the hoop should hit on each revolution. Once you're ready for more, she'll have you shift your weight between your feet. Master that, and she'll get you doing her jab and cross boxing routine. It's a gradual process, and if you can't do the most advanced steps, you just need to keep hooping.

» **Workout:** The hoops weigh only 1.5 pounds each, but they'll still get your arms cooking when you're lifting them above your head. Or maybe that's the glove weights (1 to 3 pounds) Lieder recommends you wear for class. Staying in a squat while hooping will make your buns burn, too. But it's the midsection that sees the most action, says student Diana Milikhiker, 38, who says she's seen her tummy get tauter since starting the classes in December. "I've gotten compliments from my friends," she adds.

» **Crowd:** Although the women — and, yes, they're all women — range in age from their 20s to their 50s, they're all young at heart. After all, class does require playing with a child's toy for an hour, and every session has time set aside for freestyling, which allows you to explore your creativity (while letting your heart rate come back down). It's also particularly popular with mothers and daughters. "It's our thing together," says Sarah Verner, 23, who comes with her 50-year-old mom, Jane. "We get to laugh at each other." The two of them have become so hooked that they have hoops at home for practice.

» **Garb:** Since shirts have a tendency to ride up while hooping, Lieder recommends opting for long shirts. And try to avoid slippery fabrics, which make it harder to keep the hoop up.

Photos by Lawrence Luk for Express

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