

The new NORMAL

Self-scanning temperature checks, fixed workouts stations and pre-booked slots; going to the gym is going to feel very different in a post-Covid world...

Since lockdown, many of us have had our exercise routines upturned. But, with 42 percent of Brits claiming to have a better workout at home than at the gym, and 62 percent feeling healthier overall since lockdown started, will gyms be as popular as they were pre-lockdown? Or, will many regulars be swapping their monthly subscription for a virtual class? To find out, we asked some of the top trainers at the UK's leading gyms what to expect when they open their doors and how they plan to make us feel safe.

SQUEAKY CLEAN

First things first: if you're expecting to be surrounded by sweaty bodies, think again. For many gyms, social distancing and hygiene measures are their biggest priority. "It's hard to have a concrete vision of what 'going back to the gym' will look like because every day something is changing due to the rules and regulations," says PT Haydin Elliott, head trainer and co-owner of F45 Oxford Circus and F45 Soho. "However, we're implementing a lot of new health and safety measures, such as a non-shared equipment solution for in-studio workouts, fixed stations to help maintain social distancing and eliminate person-to-person contact." For other clubs, precautions will be in place before you've even picked up a dumbbell. "We've been working closely with ukactive (a non-profit UK industry fitness association) to create a comprehensive framework for gyms and boutique studios to become Covid-secure," says James Balfour, PT at Rebel Gym ([rebel.com/uk]). The cleaning standards in gyms such as Rebel are described

as 'incredibly diligent' with self-scanning temperature checks and masks available (though not mandatory) if you desire to wear one; as well as cleaners set to go in before, and after, every class.

73%
OF US WILL BE KEEPING UP WITH OUR AT-HOME WORKOUT ROUTINE ONCE LIFE RETURNS TO NORMAL

(BOWFLEX)

CLASS OF ONE

If the gym was a weekly social fixture for you pre-lockdown, then be prepared for your classes to look a little different. According to ukactive, classes are likely to be shortened to keep the numbers down in the changing rooms and the amount of people in your weekly spin session may also be reduced. Gym goers have also been warned to not expect the same level of proximity in studios and that the 'dynamic within the studio will change'. That might not be the worst thing though, as Chatty Dobson, owner of Studio FLEX Chelsea ([flexchelsea.com]) explains: "Class sizes will be smaller because of social distancing, so it may reduce the atmosphere marginally. However, each individual will

WHEN ASKED, 39 PERCENT OF US SAID THAT AFTER LOCKDOWN WAS OVER, WE'D BE CANCELLING OUR GYM MEMBERSHIP

(BOWFLEX)



“Many fitness professionals are contemplating the benefits of working out in the open air”

OUTDOOR ENTRY

If the sunny weather that we've been having has inspired you to take your exercise routine outdoors, then it probably won't come as a big surprise that many fitness professionals are contemplating the benefits of working out in the open air. "We're already seeing an increase in the number of requests we're having for PT sessions in the park," says PT Hollie Grant ([allatrest.co.uk]). "It's far easier to comply with social distancing guidelines in open spaces and there's no shared equipment to worry about either. It makes sense for studios to offer classes outdoors while people are still nervous about being in a closed environment with others – plus, it reduces the need for physical spaces which can be costly to rent. However, I do think that there will come a time where consumers want to get back to equipment-based classes, such as reformer Pilates, that simply cannot be performed outside and that need a studio."

THE JOE WICKS EFFECT

Many of us already know that home workouts have become a pivotal part of lockdown exercise. Live classes, such as Joe Wicks' PE Lessons, have meant that many of us have been able to roll out of bed straight into a class, removing barriers such as location and time. Brits have also been stocking up on home gym equipment over the past few weeks. According to a survey carried out by Bowflex, treadmills are the most wished-for item in the home (32 percent), followed by stationary bikes (19 percent). But many PTs aren't as convinced that people will have swapped the gym for their front room permanently. "I believe online workouts and parks will remain part of people's fitness routine and that's great, but fitness studios offer an experience that you cannot replicate elsewhere," says James Balfour. "If this pandemic has taught us anything, it's the importance of human interaction." Other PTs see the return of gyms tied in with the current demand for on-screen fitness. "Our sense is that online workouts are here to stay," says Caciimhe Bamber, co-founder of London Gym Digne Fitness ([dignefitness.com]). "For this reason, we are investing heavily behind our new online platform as we believe this gives our members greater choice around how, and when, they dip their toes back in the studio waters." **H W**

