

THE

# DIRTY DOZEN

## MF UNCOVERS THE 12 WORST FITNESS INVENTIONS OF ALL TIME

LAME FITNESS GADGETS DIDN'T BEGIN AND END WITH SUZANNE SOMERS' BUTTMASTER. FROM THE DAY MAN FIRST STRIVED TO BECOME PEC-TACULAR, BUSINESSMEN DREAMED UP INEFFECTIVE GIZMOS WITH ONE SIMPLE GOAL: SEPARATING A DUMBBELL FROM HIS MONEY. SO WE COMBED THROUGH THE DUSTY MEN'S FITNESS ATTIC AND FOUND WHAT WE BELIEVE ARE THE 12 WORST FITNESS INVENTIONS OF ALL TIME.

PLEASE, WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T TRY THESE AT HOME.

### "SANITIZED" TAPE WORMS

**What the hell was it?** Parasites. After swallowing them, they'd nest in your gut and feed off digesting food.

**Debut:** 100-some-odd years ago

**The promise:** You'll lose weight!

These crawlers, bragged an old-timey ad, were "Friends for a fair form. Jar packed and easy to swallow."

**Our verdict:** "You also would have lost vitamins, minerals, and intestinal tissue," says fitness expert Tom Seabourne, Ph.D., author of *Mind/Body Fitness*.

Plus, had you ingested these mail-order monstrosities, you surely would've become the object of such groaners as, "Hey, what's eating you?"

### THE DUMBBELL CANE

**What the hell was it?** A cane with, well, a metal dumbbell attached.

**Debut:** 1910

**The promise:** "It can be swung in various ways as you walk, with apparent unconsciousness," boasted the not-quite-grammatically-correct advertisement, allowing for a seemingly effortless workout. Sure, it made swingers look like dandies, but at least they were diesel.

**Our verdict:** A glorified bludgeon (which would never clear today's airport security). "A *waif* may have found the weight enough to increase muscle," notes Seabourne, "but the average male needs a few more pounds to feel the burn."



### THE PROSTATE-GLAND WARMER

**What the hell was it?** A nine-foot-long electric cord with a 4¼-inch butt plug on one end and a blue light bulb on the other . . . just use your imagination.

**Debut:** 1918

**The promise:** Upon insertion, the plug

will somehow stimulate "the abdominal brain." It's working when the bulb lights up.

**Our verdict:** Made your ass look like a blue-light special. This is one invention you'd *hate* to have been caught road-testing. Besides, adds Seabourne, "Your prostate is plenty warm to begin with."

### DR. LAWTON'S GUARANTEED FAT REDUCER

**What the hell was it?** A round slab of soft rubber with a metal handle.

**Debut:** Early 1920s

**The promise:** You can rub body fat off and into the bloodstream (thereby "improving circulation") with this oversize eraser tip.

**Our verdict:** Useless. Of course, rubbers supposedly got their money back if it didn't work as promised in 11 days (assuming Dr. Lawton wasn't down in Rio with their cash). If any fat actually was burned by this, it was due solely to the caloric expenditure of rubbing with the thing. "A better idea," says Seabourne, "would have been to walk around the block."

BY SEAN HYSON