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**The History of Elliptical Machines**

**By Jennifer Dennis**

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The History of Elliptical Machines

The presence of elliptical trainers has grown more and more prevalent in the last few years. Go into any public gym and you will see that the number of elliptical trainers is more than the number of treadmills! While the treadmill is a popular method of exercise, fitness enthusiasts have grown to love and look forward to a rewarding hour on the elliptical trainer.

With each year, more and more people realize how important it is to stay fit. Obesity, high cholesterol and more are increasing among our population, year after year. Children are now getting diseases formerly seen in elderly adults—all due to the fact that they are in poor health. With increased aerobic activity, an individual will add years to their life, as well as appreciate a stronger body, higher self-confidence and so much more!

Elliptical trainers are a direct result of individuals wanting a superior fitness workout. For years, fitness experts have encouraged cardiovascular exercise to help circulation, burn fat, build stronger bones and muscles and more. The best results were garnered from hiking, running and other weight-bearing activities. Fitness equipment mimicked these natural exercises with the creation of the treadmill, stepper and others. Unfortunately, these exercises also contributed to additional stress on the back, knees and other joints. There was a need for a machine that could generate maximum cardiovascular exercise—with minimal stress and pressure on the back and joints.

Enter the elliptical machine. Like many other fitness equipment pieces, when the elliptical first arrived, it was a huge success. Some in the fitness industry, however, questioned its staying power. How long would this one last? The elliptical machine (and its manufacturers) has silenced those critics. Year

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after year, the popularity of elliptical trainers shines. The goal to create a machine that helped a body expend maximum calories through minimal pressure was

complete.

The term "elliptical" comes from the idea that the exercise motion performed is a "preferred pattern of movement." When you jump on an elliptical machine, the pedals move in an egg-shape or oval "preferred pattern," creating a rhythmic, smooth movement that works your body—without any stress on the back or joints.

The first elliptical was created by Precor in 1995. A key component of the 'elliptical machines' success was due to the fact that a beginner and expert fitness enthusiast alike could jump on and receive a superior workout in a variety of ways—immediately! Reebok came on board with an invaluable addition to the

– an upper body workout. In 1997, upper body handle bars were added for

additional benefit. By adding handle bars that move with the body, an individual can get an upper body workout that is just as effective as the lower

With each year, elliptical trainers have improved. Today's handles pump in perfect coordination with the pedals, enhancing the workout tremendously. In addition, the upper body handles create a more natural walking/striding motion for your increased enjoyment. With premier construction and advanced technological benefits, each new model and style machine has additional monitors, features and more for your use.

With the addition of a variety of exciting fitness programs into premier machines, the fitness community has a great machine to achieve a range of exercise goals. Since the elliptical machine mimics the natural movements of your body, you can easily and effectively burn calories, tone your body and more through its unique motions. Monitor your workout with the added speed, time and fitness level readings on the panel in front of you throughout the length of your workout.

As the number of distributors and manufacturers of elliptical machines increases, the competitive nature is sure to bring new and exciting features and benefits to the machine. Give yourself a great workout on an elliptical machine today!

About the Author: Jennifer Dennis is a successful author and regular contributor to

– a fitness and treadmill industry resource

that features treadmill reviews,

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### **Looking To Buy Home Exercise Equipment?**

**By Ray Hudson**

Looking to buy Home exercise equipment? Here is how to choose between two of the best selling ones: treadmills and ellipticals

Both elliptical trainers and treadmills are two of the most popular home fitness equipment. They are excellent tools for getting an aerobic workout indoors. In fact, When you compare ellipticals vs treadmill, you will quickly realize that treadmills have been around much longer whereas elliptical machines have only come to the party fairly recently. As a result, treadmills are wider known and more commonplace. However, a quick trip to your local gym will show that there are almost as many ellipticals these days as there are treadmills. There is a good reason for that.

A quick comparison:

When you compare treadmills to elliptical trainers, you can't help but notice how impact free the elliptical machine is.

With the elliptical trainer, there is no impact on the ground, so the joints in your lower body are free from any abuse. Although the treadmill mat is better for your knees than cement, there is still a significant amount of impact on your joints.

One obvious point that is in favor of treadmills is that it provides a better training experience for a dedicated runner/jogger than an elliptical trainer. If you are training for a marathon or even a 10k, and you don't want to go outdoors too often during the months, you are certainly better off with a quality treadmill.

That being said, if you are looking for a quality aerobic workout with the maximum amount of efficiency, you will not be able to overlook the elliptical trainer. Most ellipticals give you a total body workout if you have dual action handlebars for your arms and foot pedals for your legs, whereas treadmills focus more on your lower body as they simulate the jogging experience.

What is even more interesting, according to recent studies, is that the lack of impact on the joints

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allows the user to burn roughly the same amount of calories as treadmills with the impression of putting CONSIDERABLY less effort.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that ellipticals have been the machine of choice for senior citizens with knee problems, as well as physical trainers who are involved in rehabilitating their clients.

This is what Thomas Altena, an exercise physiologist at the University of Missouri–Columbia, had to say: "The physiological responses associated with elliptical exercises were nearly identical to treadmill exercises." He went on to conclude that "both exercise machines are effective for increasing the amount of calories burned and for producing cardio respiratory health and training benefits..."

Finally, one feature which is often overlooked about elliptical trainers is the ability to add variety to your aerobic workout. Whenever anyone is on an exercise plan, one of the biggest challenges he faces is to stay motivated and interested in his workouts. With the treadmill, the ability to change the incline, as well as the intensity are big pluses, which has contributed to its popularity over the last decade.

The elliptical trainer matches these features and has a few additional ones of its own.

First, we spoke earlier of the dual action handlebars. Well as an exerciser, in addition to changing the cross ramp incline (which is available in Precor models,

) as well as varying the intensity,

you also have the option to not use the handlebar and ONLY focus on your lower body.

Although this option is not used often, it DOES add variety to your workout. Also, you can vary the intensity in more ways. You can increase the speed of you motion with or without changing the difficulty level of the stride. With treadmills you have to manually change the speed level to increase your speed.

However, the most critical feature, and what separates the elliptical trainer from many other exercise machines when it comes to variety, is the forward and reversible feature on the foot pedals. When you are going forward, you feel like a cross country skier hitting the long slopes. However, when you reverse your pedal motion, you can target your lower body in a completely different way. Without question, you are targeting your quadricep muscles and will soon feel them burn after a few minutes.

Although it is too early to state that elliptical machines will dethrone the treadmill as the exercise equipment of choice, you can bet that they will give them a good run for their money. If you look at all the health clubs and rehab clinics, you will soon realize that elliptical trainers are more than just a fad and are here to stay.

Ray Hudson is the chief editor for

, a consumer oriented site

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that focuses exclusively on elliptical trainers. You get unbiased reviews on top elliptical brands including Smooth (

),

Proform, (

) and many others.

The site also features tips on budgeting for scuba equipment (

) as well as a scuba gear checklist (

).

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