

SURE YOURSELF SLIM

HAVE you ever wondered why surfers always seem to have such firm, toned bodies? It's because surfing the waves works the legs and the body's core muscles. Now a bizarre new exercise gizmo, the Human Touch Board, promises to give the same results without our having to go near water. Resembling a small motorised surfboard, it simulates the same motion and manufacturers claim that using it for 15 minutes, twice a day, can give you a perfect bikini body in just six weeks. HILARY FREEMAN challenged five women to see if they could surf their way to a better body...

Jo Ives, 26, is a PA to a lawyer. She's 5ft 7in and lives in south London with her fiancé.

BEFORE:	AFTER:
Weight: 10st 10lb	10st ½lb
Waist: 29½in	26½in
Hips: 38½in	36½in
Thigh: 23¾in	22in
Calf: 16¼in	15½in



JO SAYS: When it comes to exercise, I was a bit of a cliché — I had the gym membership but I didn't use it. I've always been quite self-conscious about my body, particularly my flabby thighs and bottom, which is one of the reasons I didn't like going to the gym.

On first sight, I couldn't understand how standing on a moving platform could help me tone up my body. I was extremely sceptical and was prepared to be disappointed.

I have to admit it wasn't the easiest thing to use. As the machine replicates the action of a surfboard, it pitches and falls, so just balancing on it increases your core balance and coordination skills. It also improves your posture and there are exercises you can carry out while you are on the Touch Board such as squats while holding weights which help sculpt your legs, thighs, bottom and hips.

I felt very unsteady and unbalanced at first, and had trouble staying upright. I found that on a couple of occasions, if I didn't concentrate, or was distracted, I lost my balance and nearly fell. I also found it hard to do the exercises while keeping my balance. But once I got used to it, the pitching and rolling sensation became second nature.

After my first few sessions my legs were excruciatingly painful. For the first couple of weeks, achy thighs were the only sign the machine was having any effect, and I began to wonder if I was wasting my time.

But then I began to notice that my thighs felt firmer — and that stopped me from giving up.

Within three weeks, I could see that my jeans were fitting better and my waist was getting smaller. Now, after six weeks, the results are obvious. I feel more energetic and the roll of fat that sat on my waistband has been reduced considerably. I'm a size ten for the first time in years and I'm actually contemplating wearing a bikini on the beach this summer.

I'm delighted with my toned body and weight loss, but to be honest it's hard to be sure how much weight I'd have

It promises you a beautiful bikini body without having to go near a beach. But is the latest gym gadget a wonder or a wipeout?

lost and how much I would have toned up if I'd just done half an hour of any kind of exercise every day for six weeks.

The surfing machine is supposed to give you double the results compared to the same time spent on ordinary exercise, but I've no way of knowing if that's so. Still, there's no denying I am looking better than I have for a long time. Maybe I should take up surfing for real.

Jo Rakowicz, a 31-year-old accountant, is 5ft 7in and lives in Friern Barnet, north London, with her partner and two children.

BEFORE	AFTER
Weight: 11st 10lb	10st 8½lb
Waist: 31½in	28½in
Hips: 43in	39in
Thigh: 26in	23¾in
Calf: 14in	13½in



JO SAYS: I've always been a classic pear shape with chunky thighs, but since I had my children I have become a lot heavier and much thicker around the waist.

I tried every diet under the sun and worked out at the gym regularly, but whatever I did, I never managed to lose more than ten pounds, and then put it all straight back on again.

Before I started, I

was the Human Touch Board's biggest sceptic. It looked so daft. I didn't think I'd stick at it for more than a week.

When it comes to exercise, one of my main problems is finding the time because the children demand my full attention. For this reason, this contraption wasn't very practical, because I couldn't use the machine when they were around as they would just try to climb on it with me.

I had to get up at 6am every day and do the first 15-minute session before they woke up, and the second session at night, when they were asleep.

I found using the board surprisingly easy and I didn't hurt at all afterwards. I know I looked a bit ridiculous on the machine. It made everything wobble around, particularly my flabby bottom. I did squats, twists and arm exercises with weights, so I could tone up my upper body, too.

Other people started to notice results before I did. Friends said my waist looked smaller, which must have been thanks to the belly dancing-style wiggling exercise I did on the machine.

Once I began to feel slimmer, it motivated me to start eating more healthily, too. I'm the type of person who needs an incentive, and seeing results makes you want to stay slim. Three weeks in, I had to fly to Edinburgh on business. The machine is so heavy and bulky there's no way I could take it with me, so it's not very practical if you want to stay in shape away from the home.

I was amazed to discover I'd lost over a stone after six weeks. Before I used the machine, I deluded myself that I was a size 14, when, in reality, I was a size 16. Now all my tight clothes are actually loose and I've become a size 12-14. I've even dug my old bikinis out of the attic.



Pictures: ROB BROWN/BEN LISTER/STEVE POOLE

Ciara Ferrao-Read, 27, is 5ft 4in, and a special effects make-up artist from Leicester.

BEFORE	AFTER
Weight: 10st 5lb	9st 6lb
Waist: 29in	26in
Hips: 40in	37¼in
Thigh: 24½in	22¾in
Calf: 15in	14½in



CIARA SAYS: I was told the Human Touch Board would give maximum exercise results for minimum effort, and liked the sound of that because I wanted to work on my thighs, hips and big bottom.

I used to go to the gym once a week or so, but it didn't make much difference. If I'm honest, cakes and sugary puddings were my downfall.

At the weigh-in at the beginning of this challenge, I was absolutely mortified to discover that, at 10st 5lb, I was almost a stone heavier than I'd believed.

Initially I wasn't impressed because it's not the most user-friendly piece of equipment. I found using it really hard: I couldn't do the squatting down exercises you're supposed to do while you're on it at all, and was terrified I'd fall off. I actually had to stop it and get off at one point. Once I'd got my balance, though — by focusing on a fixed point ahead — the 15 minutes flew by.

The blasted thing also required a lot of commitment. Fitting in two sessions a day was difficult, so I chose to do one half-hour session instead. Even so, what with work and my social life, and a bad back one weekend, I did miss quite a few days.

Despite this, after a couple of weeks, my flatmate said I was starting to look more toned and my jeans began to feel looser. I could tell my stomach and waist were smaller, and my arms looked firmer.

I couldn't believe it when, at the end of the six weeks, I found I'd lost practically a stone. Now I'm the weight I thought I was originally — and I'm planning to get down to nine stone if I can. All my size 14 clothes are really loose and I need size 12s now. My bottom has lifted and I've even got some muscle definition on the front of my thighs, which I never thought I'd get.

Emma Davys is a 5ft 8in, 20-year-old art student from Muswell Hill, north London.

BEFORE	AFTER
Weight: 10st 5lb	9st 11lb
Waist: 29½in	27½in
Hips: 38in	35½in
Thighs: 23½in	21½in
Calf: 14in	13½in



EMMA SAYS: I wanted a toned body, with a smaller waist and a more shapely bum. I'd given up on the gym because I just was throwing money down the drain and I never managed to motivate myself to go running or jogging. The surf machine appealed as I could use it at home.

I have been sking and know people who've been snowboarding, and they

do have toned bodies so I thought the machine might work.

If anything, I found the machine too easy. I got on it, could stay upright and do all the exercises, and worked my way up to top speed really quickly. I did as many twists and wiggles as I could in the hope that I'd end up with a smaller waist. At the end of a session, I felt a bit hot, but I certainly wasn't exhausted or dripping in sweat.

After a week of doing it twice a day, religiously, I couldn't see any difference and I hadn't lost any weight. I don't think I'd been working hard enough, or bending my legs properly. I decided to give it another week and really work at it. It was worth it: two weeks in, I'd lost just over two pounds.

By the third week, I suddenly realised why people talk about feeling comfortable in their jeans. Mine had always felt tight and restrictive around the waist, but now they had stopped digging in.

I could even get into my friend's size ten skinny jeans. She'd given them to me when she lost weight and I swore I'd get into them eventually. Now I can.

Emily Ashworth is a 21-year-old fashion student. She is 5ft 3in and lives in Fulham, west London.

BEFORE:	AFTER:
Weight: 10st 4lb	9st 13½lb
Waist: 31½in	30in
Hips: 41in	39½in
Thigh: 23½in	22¾in
Calf: 14½in	14¼in



EMILY SAYS: I did no exercise at all before I tried the surf machine. I simply don't have the time — what with college, studying and working in the evenings. And, to be honest, I don't like exercise, though I admit I don't like my large hips and wide thighs and I wanted a flatter stomach.

I hoped the surf machine would help me lose a few pounds and tone up my body all over. I thought the machine looked really weird, and the first time I tried it I had terrible problems with my balance — it brought back bad memories of being hopeless at gymnastics at school. But, by the end of the first evening, I'd found my balance on it.

When I got a stitch during my first session, I knew it must be doing me some good. Afterwards, my leg muscles really ached, as if I'd been for a run. I kept the machine in my room, so it was there in front of me all the time and I couldn't make any excuses not to use it. I did the exercises they recommend on the machine using weights I'd bought but never used.

After two weeks, my mum said she was sure my legs looked thinner. Her exact words were: 'So you actually do have some bones in your knees, then!'

At the end of the six-week trial, I went to Topshop. Before I used the machine, I tried on a fitted dress, but the 12 was too tight and I didn't buy it. They still had it, so I tried it on again. This time, the 12 was loose and I actually ended up buying a ten, which was exciting.

In total, I lost four and half pounds in six weeks. I would have liked it to have been more, but I did lose an inch and a half from my waist and I'm thrilled I can fit into a smaller dress size.

THE human touch board costs £399. To order one, call 0844 888 0456, www.humantouchboard.co.uk