

Are you a fitness fibber?

Turn your health habits into something you're proud to come clean about

Posting pics of your super-healthy salads, but conveniently neglecting to snap the cheesecake that followed... Tweeting about the 5K you ran in 20 minutes when really it took 30... Posting on Facebook that you got up at the crack of dawn for a weights session, when you actually smacked the snooze button and gave it a miss... Any of this sound familiar?

'52% of people lie about the exercise they do'

Fifty two per cent of people have admitted to lying about the level of exercise they actually do, and the same percentage also lie about how good they are at sticking to their healthy diet.

But why do we feel compelled to tell white lies about how healthy we are? And what can we do to forget about the fibbing and actually become the super-humans that we are trying to portray ourselves to be?

TELL ME LIES

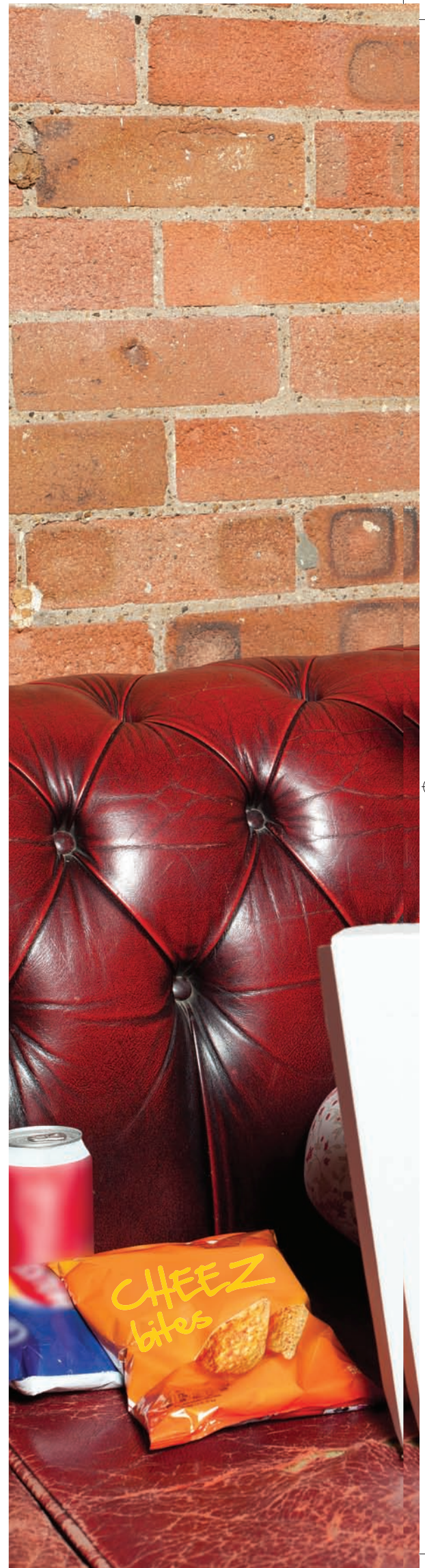
Thanks to high-profile health

campaigns and a rise in interesting ways to exercise, everyone's a bit more conscious of working out and eating well.

So where once people may have tweeted and posted about a lovely new pair of shoes or an amazing night out, now friends feel the need to keep you in the loop on their workouts and diet. You might even do the same.

But statistics suggest that a great deal of these updates are fabricated, so what drives us to fib about our fitness? Personal trainer Sarah Lindsay – a three-time Olympian and ten-time British speed skating champion, who's now director of Embody Fitness (embodyfitness.co.uk) – reckons that people lying to themselves and others about working out is nothing out of the ordinary.

'I've seen how difficult it is for people to talk about their insecurities and body hang-ups,' she says. 'In fact, it's not uncommon for people to cry in their first consultation. Sharing insecurities can make people really emotional. They end up lying to themselves a lot of the time so they don't have to take responsibility. Who wants to say "I'm greedy and lazy"?''





Too late, Sarah realised she'd typed 'burping' not 'burpees'



Did you know?

- Brighton is the region most likely to lie about exercising!
- The most common reason for lying about exercise and diet on social media is to look good to friends
- Most white lies about exercise and eating habits are told on Facebook
- Women are more likely to lie about exercise than men
- Most people exaggerate, rather than outright lie – such as upping the distance covered or weight lifted

It's much easier, in the short-term, to cover up these insecurities by expressing what you would *like* to do if you could muster up the motivation – rather than what you're *actually* doing.

TWISTING THE TRUTH

Everyone has different reasons for bending the truth. But the white lies we might tell on a daily basis – whether they're related to fitness or not – are usually due to feeling pressure to fit in socially. In other words, we want to look good in front of our friends.

'There has always been a pressure to impress – I don't think this is a new phenomena,' says Dr Jane Gilmour, clinical psychologist at MPH Fitness (mphfitness.com). 'What might have changed, though, is an awareness about our ideal health and fitness goals – so it has become a social requirement to discuss our own health and fitness behaviour.'

A sweatband.com survey reveals that women are more likely to lie than men. With the blame for these lies placed on avoiding social embarrassment, this is easy to believe.

'There is greater social pressure on women compared to men regarding their appearance,' notes Dr Gilmour. 'So we're more likely to mislead others – and perhaps ourselves – about our diet and exercise.'

CHASE THE DREAM

The image you create on your social media updates or in conversations with friends is someone you'd be proud to be, but maybe lack the motivation to become. Dr Gilmour suggests that simply identifying specific achievable goals – rather than generic, impersonal ones – could be the solution to this problem.

'If you don't know when you've reached your goal, you won't have a rush of success, even if you've worked hard,' she says. 'For example, "I want to feel better" is a huge and vague goal – which means you might feel deflated or a failure, even though you've made positive changes.'

GOAL!

A more specific goal – such as aiming to exercise four times a week, or cutting out fizzy drinks – allows you to see whether or not it's been achieved.

It's also

important to make it achievable. So, if you're new to exercise, your goals should be different to those of someone who is more experienced or advanced.

Former Olympian Sarah Lindsay confirms that an emphasis on goals can make all the difference, as long as they're personal to you. 'Whether it's an aesthetic goal, health reasons or an event you want to compete in, you have to find a purpose for what you're doing,' she says.

'An emphasis on goals can make all the difference'

'I personally found it very difficult after retiring from sport. What goal could motivate me as much as training for the Olympic Games? In the end I decided that what I really wanted was to set a good example for my clients. That's what motivated me to

comply to a diet and train hard.'

It's also important to educate yourself about why you should want the things you're lying about. 'The more you learn about health, fitness and strength, the more you want to comply,' Sarah explains. 'When you truly understand the implications of eating that food or lifting those weights for your immediate and long-term health, it becomes more important and easier to make better choices.'

Take action!

Overcome insecurities with Sarah Lindsay's action plan:

- Try not to complain about feeling bad about your body.
- Write down three things you're going to change this week. You'll make the improvements and feel you're

taking control of the situation.

- Put things into perspective. Everyone has to start somewhere and most people



are in the gym for the same reason. Don't fall into the 'I'll lose weight before I go to the gym' trap. If you put it off, it might never happen!