



THIS MORNING I ROAD-TESTED THE AlterG; the Anti-Gravity Treadmill that lowers your body weight and reduces the impact on your joints so you can go faster, further and for longer. It means that practically anyone can run so all excuses are off (sorry, folks). The technology comes from the US, where it's being used to get overweight individuals exercising without damaging their joints, rehabilitation patients up and about and athletes intensifying their regimes for the Olympics.

I'm with Simon McConnell, personal trainer at the London City branch of Nuffield Heath Fitness & Wellbeing. He asks me myriad health questions and stresses that I need to be absolutely honest about how I'm feeling, because this is something completely new and my body might not like it. When I ask Simon what it will feel like, he explains that it's like walking on the moon. I presume it might be entering the realms of the obvious to clarify that I have not been there and just nod acceptingly.

Simon begins by zipping my waist into what looks like a deflated bouncy castle and my heart starts fluttering as I watch it expand like an airbed around me. My top half is normal, but from the hips down I am encased in a giant airtight bag. With a start point of 100 per cent weight, Simon begins increasing the air and reducing the weight I have to carry by ten per cent at a time. I feel the pressure changing around my calves and am then lifted onto my tip toes, causing my legs to propel round at all angles. Great fun, but not what we're aiming for. He reduces it down to 70 per cent, so I can run with ease while keeping some degree of control and suddenly I find my stride. The compartment has transparent sides so that Simon can assess my technique, but is blocked out from above, meaning I can't actually see my feet. I look at my reflection in the window and see my body floating with legs in motion, but the lack of effort suggests that they do not belong to me. I now understand what running must be like for the super-fit – gliding over the ground, body upright, legs working rhythmically. I run like that for 15 minutes, chatting away as if it were second nature. Suddenly, I appreciate the huge motivational element of this. My usual five-

Follow Jess on Twitter
@JessHough_MC



Extreme Beauty Weightless Workout

An inflatable treadmill – who knew? But can it really make running a synch? Jessica Hough finds out

minute cameo on the treadmill is stretched out to a respectable 20-minute stint without any discomfort and, whereas I usually run at a flat-out speed of 8.5km/h, I am now striding out at 10km/h with ease.

But as I am gently increased to my full 100 per cent body weight again the heavy sensation reappears and my legs feel like lead. I am slowly brought back to reality.

When I come to a stop I have to sit down and rest for a moment. Simon was right – it is a disconcerting experience for the body.

As I walk home, I do wonder if it was cheating, because I'm in no way tired or out of breath. But my heart is pumping quickly and my legs made all the motion unaided, plus I have built up a sweat. I'll keep on doing it the hard way, running in the park, but I might swing by and have another go without gravity, just to remember what it feels like to be really good at running. **AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmills are set to roll out to gyms nationwide. To find your nearest machine, visit alter-g.com.**

Photograph by Scope Beauty