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self-confidence, creativity, and sense of rhythm. Stolte describes it as “transforming and transporting” and says that some people use hooping as a substitute for meditation.

Sometimes, even the most ardent fitness buff gets bored with the same old workout. Since hooping is fun, it is easier to get

motivated. It’s a social activity that is safe for all fitness levels, including pregnant women. “One of the great things about hooping is that it is an individual workout and everyone works at their own pace,” says hooper Irene Davis. “I couldn’t think of something I’d rather do on a Sunday morning than hoop.” **HWO**



### *What do I wear when hooping?*

- Comfortable clothes are essential; the less the better, since the hoop sticks to skin.
- Yoga or workout wear made of cotton or other natural fibres is recommended because they have some grip. Dry-weave and silky fabrics are slippery.
- Sleeveless tops are preferred for arm and chest hooping.
- Shoes are optional.

### *Where do I get a hoop?*

- Hoops are usually provided by the facility offering the class. Dovercourt Recreation Centre instructors sell custom-designed hoops through Siren Hoops for practicing at home (sirenhoops@gmail.com).
- Hooping websites provide tutorials for making your own hoop. Here are a couple:
  - <http://www.jasonunbound.com/hoops.html>
  - [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2343281\\_make-hula-hoop.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2343281_make-hula-hoop.html).



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# The Scoop On Hooping



Photos: Konick Photography

By Benita Baker

Want an entertaining way to exercise, guaranteed to make you smile? Try hooping. Sure, it might have been something kids did in the past, but it's now a hot, new fitness craze and one that's taking Ottawa by storm. But beware: Hooping is addictive. Once you start, you won't want to stop.

"I love hooping because it's a refreshingly fun form of fitness and it keeps me smiling from start to finish," says hooper Kristine Karpinski.

Hooping is similar to what you might remember as a kid, but with a big difference. The hula hoops are bigger and heavier than the thin plastic ones found in toy stores, so they rotate more slowly and are easier to keep spinning.

They're also made from plumbing tubing that has been decorated with a variety of tapes that provide glitter, grip, and sparkle. "Glow" hoops feature tiny LED lights and batteries inside semi-translucent white tubing, creating shimmering light trails when the hoop spins.

There are even fire hoops for the more expert devotees. Hoops average 42 inches in diameter, are much larger than a child's hoop, and weigh about one to two pounds.

While it might seem a challenge, at first, to learn the techniques, with patience and practice you're sure to pick up hooping in no time. And don't think you're too old or too awkward for it. At Dovercourt Recreation Centre, the ages of participants in the five hooping classes offered range from teenagers to women in their late 50's.

Both Staci Allington, a 20-year-old student, and Sharon Ogilvie, a 53-year-old, have been hooping for over a year. Allington describes hooping as "a fresh and exciting way to get fit." At first, Ogilvie was concerned that she was too old to hoop, but after she gave it a try she was hooked. "People are genuinely surprised

when I tell them I hoop," she says. "Believe me, it takes a little explaining... and sometimes a demo!"

So do you just loop the hoop over your body and start swiveling your hips? Not quite. Hooping is trick- and movement-driven, and classes focus on techniques for moving the hoop on different parts of the body — waist, hip, chest, shoulders, neck, and thigh — as well as flowing patterns off the body in horizontal, vertical, and diagonal planes. Keeping the hoop spinning on the body requires a steady back and forth movement, rather than rotating the hips. The goal is to teach people to learn how to flex their torsos; to flex their abs and extend back muscles to create the push-pull, forward-back motion.

According to Trish Stolte, a hooping instructor at Dovercourt, the hoop is your dance partner. "The hoop becomes an extension of you," she says. "At first it is like a partner whose language you don't speak, but then you learn to make subtle adjustments, so it moves with you."

The benefits of hooping are numerous. It is a heart-pumping, low-impact, cardio workout that can burn 400 to 600 calories an hour. Hooping targets the core — building strength and toning abs, obliques, glutes, quads, and arms — and improves posture, balance, and flexibility.

Hooping enthusiasts also talk about the calming and stress-relieving effects of hooping. And they claim that it boosts

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