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SHAPE UP FOR SUMMER IN SAFETY

Joining a gym so you can squeeze into those skimpy summer outfits could actually do you more harm than good, warn personal injury lawyers.

Experience of members of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) show that accidents caused by faulty gym equipment or careless instructors happen all too often, resulting in too many exercisers being needlessly injured, sometimes permanently.

APIL president, David Marshall says: “In the experience of our members, victims of negligence at fitness clubs can suffer from a wide variety of nasty injuries ranging from a torn Achilles heel to a broken wrist and back problems to broken necks. One claimant even had to have his leg amputated due to a horrific leg fracture. It may come as a surprise that avoidable accidents can happen in the larger health club chains as well as smaller independent gyms. We believe any avoidable injury is unacceptable”

Sport and leisure consultant, Andrew Petherick, who also acts as an expert witness in sports injury cases, says the problem is widespread: “In my experience the most common cause of preventable gym injury at the moment is the poor standard of equipment – often it’s simply not serviced on a regular basis. More worryingly some of the equipment does not comply with European safety standards.

“The leisure industry lags behind other sectors when it comes to health and safety. All too often the management doesn’t undertake a full risk assessment, fails to set up standard operating procedures and has no formal system for doing carrying out regular inspections of equipment,” he adds.

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APIL recommends that budding fitness fanatics ask the following questions when deciding on which fitness club to join:

- ? Does the management have public liability insurance? This will ensure that the company will be able to pay compensation should you suffer a personal injury there due to negligence. A certificate should be displayed in a prominent position, usually on a wall.
- ? Are the instructors fully qualified? Check trainers hold qualifications recognised by the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) and that they are members of the Register of Exercise Professionals.
- ? Is an induction provided? This is imperative to ensure you know how to use equipment safely and effectively.
- ? Is the gym equipment maintained on a regular basis? Look out for signs of disrepair.
- ? Is there an acceptable complaints/suggestions system set up for members and staff?

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Note to editors:

The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) campaigns to prevent needless injuries caused by negligence and for changes in the law to help people who have been injured to gain proper redress through the courts and prevent avoidable injury.

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