

'Stairs are my SECRET WEAPON'

Denise Van Outen reveals the exercise she's fallen in love with in her forties, plus what motivates her to keep fit...

A bba's *Super Trouper* blasts from the speakers and, in-between photo calls and sipping green tea, Denise Van Outen passes the time with a little jig (Abba's a particular favourite). Wowing in a sporty blue swimsuit, she's working hard but having fun.

The same applies to her fitness regime. 'The key thing for me is doing something I enjoy. That's the only way I stick to it. I like exercise to be sociable!' says the Magic FM DJ and stage and TV star, who reckons she's fitter than ever in her forties. 'I find the gym hard because people are so focused.'

Now 41, Denise has found two forms of exercise she's passionate about - cycling and golf. 'I love the fresh air, so they're perfect.'

'I love being a mum but need to switch off'

Denise fell in love with cycling after taking part in a number of charity challenges, most recently last year's 250-mile ride through Vietnam and Cambodia. 'Taking part in events for charities motivates me to exercise more than anything else,' she admits. 'It's a win-win situation - the charity gets fundraising and I stay fit. When any of my friends are struggling to find motivation to exercise, I always suggest they try a challenge and set up a sponsorship page. When people donate money you feel so terrible if you don't train for, and complete, the challenge that it inspires you to keep going.'

Over the years, Denise has gained huge amounts of inspiration from her friend and

personal trainer Nicki Waterman, never more so than in the last year while Nicki has undergone treatment for brain cancer.

'I've always turned to her when I've needed help with training. When I've done shows I'll call her up and say, 'Help, I've got to tap dance!' and she'll tell me exactly what I need to work on. Throughout her illness, she's been amazing - I can't come out with excuses not to exercise because she's kept training throughout. She's incredible.'

Denise took up her other passion, golf, 18 months ago. 'I turned 40 and wanted something that took me away from being a mum. As much as I love that role, it's full-on. I wanted something

Denise loves to cycle for charity



'I like interval training - I think it changes your body shape a lot'

outdoors that would allow me to switch off. On hilly 18-hole courses I get a good workout and swinging the club is brilliant for bingo wings! I'm addicted - I think it's for life.'

It's a sport her partner Eddie Boxshall loves too. 'We're like a comedy act on the course because we do argue quite a lot!' she laughs.

She hopes Betsy, her five-year-old daughter with ex-husband Lee Mead, will learn too. 'She's got her own little set of golf clubs! It would be lovely to play together when she's older.'

'I work hard to get these legs!'

Denise's other workouts fit around work and Betsy. 'I do the Monday and Friday morning school drop-off, so I go with some mums to a body pump class. I use free weights for squats, which kill me! At home, I spend 30 minutes on my treadmill, power walking on an incline, increasing and slowing the pace. I like interval training because I think it changes your body shape a lot.'

And her biggest fat-burning secret? 'Stairs! I never use lifts. Climbing stairs is so easy to fit into your day.' It's little wonder then why Denise claims her legs are her best asset. 'I work hard on them. My family call them 'Ted legs' because they're like my dad's! In the summer or at parties, I like my legs to look good so I can get them out. They make me feel confident and sexy.'

Denise believes a healthy diet and exercise go hand in hand. She doesn't exclude anything from her diet, but tries to restrict her carb intake at night. 'I love a jacket potato for lunch, with tuna mayo and salad. I have an Aga at home and it cooks potatoes perfectly.'

Living in the Kent countryside, she has a