

Los Angeles Times

Health

It's all about the gadgets

October 16, 2006

Do men — more so than women — dream of a solar-powered belly blaster that'll give them six-pack abs, or a holographic aerobi-chair that'll produce squared pecs, a tight butt and Lance Armstrong's VO2 max.+ without leaving their living room?

Maybe not, but it's hard to deny that gadget-happy males do have a soft spot for whiz-bang numbers, downloadable graphs and instruction manuals with tiny type. Hence the highly engineered and microchip-laced quartet, a collection of new fitness gadgets that push the envelope of technology — and sometimes of believability.

— Roy Wallack



Garmin Forerunner 305: Combination heart- rate monitor/GPS units are obviously valuable fitness tools. Not only do they describe workout intensity, speed and distance, they'll even record a map of your route. But Garmin's Forerunner 305 offers extra motivation: competition. The unit's "virtual partner" allows you to download race routes from an online library and "race" that route against people you've never met. After you record and load your workout onto the database, you can even race against yourself.

Price: \$449 (for watch, chest strap and foot pod).
(800) 800-1020; www.garmin.com.



emWave Personal Stress Reliever: You're stressed out, a nervous wreck. Your forehead's sweaty and your heart is pounding. You desperately want to whip out a yoga mat, but that will look a bit strange on the 16th green at Shady Acres Country Club. So you furtively slip an emWave out of your fanny pack, place your thumb on its pulse sensor and slowly, calmly breathe deeply in sync with the rising and falling blue light of its Heart Action Strip. And very soon, as you watch the light of its Coherence Level Indicator change from red to blue to green, your anxiety is gone and you are ready to shoot the round of your life. Inner peace and a hole-in-one through an electronic pocket yogi? Far-fetched perhaps, but also oddly logical.

Price: \$199.
(800) 450-9111; www.emwave.com



Sportline HydraCoach: It was only a matter of time before someone invented a water bottle that would remind you when to drink. The HydraCoach mates a 22-ounce polycarbonate bottle to a hydration monitor; after you enter your weight, the device calculates your daily hydration needs according to a National Research Council formula. The bottle then tracks your consumption sip by sip, ticking it off on an ounce counter and flashing reminders to drink. Price: \$29.95. (914) 964-5200; www.sportline.com



North Face Arnuva 50 Boa: No more laces coming untied. In fact, no more laces at all. The Arnuva, designed to withstand the abuse of 50-mile trail and road ultra-running races, stays cinched with a unique lacing system — a web of thin, stainless steel wires controlled by a dial on the back of the heel. A quick twist pulls the web and constricts the upper portion, providing a secure, near-custom fit without pressure points. The rest of the shoe is impressive, too; the 13-ouncer keeps your foot healthy and dry with an antimicrobial foot bed and a cool mesh upper for ventilation. Price: \$125. (866) 715-3223; www.thenorthface.com