

Benefits from bellydancing

By Raylene Bliss

FOR all those people who made a resolution to get fit in the new millennium but have already given up, bellydancing may be the answer.

Anna Menzies, Kylie Prats, Lisa Johnston, Michelle Daffy and Patricia Brown started bellydancing just before the turn of the new millennium.

Anna, a 27-year-old publicist from Woollahra, said: "I love the exotic element of bellydancing that brings richness into my life."

Kylie, a 36-year-old graphic designer from Kensington, said: "After only a few short weeks my muscle tone is increasing, I find bellydance gives me the gentle but thorough workout I have been looking for."

Lisa, a 21-year-old secretary and psychology student of Kingsford, said bellydancing had improved her confidence and posture.

Michelle, a 37-year-old office manager from Narwee, has found the benefits for her include greatly reduced back pain and some weight loss. "I did find out, although I secretly knew, that I am not very fit," she said. "Bellydancing is a hell of a lot more complicated than it looks and twice as much fun."

Patricia was shocked when, after only one class of bellydancing, her frozen shoulder improved dramatically.

Two more bellydancing devotees who began classes in June last year can attest for the healing power of this form of dance.

Marina Hatzigeorgiou found that her migraines reduced in frequency and intensity while Jennifer Zuber found her chronic hip problems disappeared.

Clare Godfrey, a 36-year-old registered nurse from Coogee, said the most positive thing about bellydancing was that it reduced stress levels.

"For the duration of the lesson I am transported to a different place and time where none of my day-to-day stresses exist," she said.

Dr Misaki Ikegame, of Potts Point Family Medical Practice, said bellydancing could help better certain conditions such as lower back problems, sciatica, osteoarthritis, sacroiliac joint pain and any other soft tissue back strain.

"It's particularly good for these conditions because it is low impact and strengthens the

back and abdominal muscles," she said. David Peterson, a physiotherapist at Potts Point Physiotherapy, said the deep transverse abdominal muscles and oblique abdominal muscles were worked by bellydance, making it unique as a form of exercise.

■ The next round of bellydancing classes start this week at the Maroubra Police and Community Youth Club, Bunnerong Road, Daceyville. Enrolments are essential. Telephone 9314 7427.