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Fitness classes up and running

FREE fitness classes available to about 800,000 West Australians will kick off in the new year.

After a successful trial in Langley Park, health insurer HBF is expanding the classes across the metropolitan area.

Sessions will be free for HBF members and less than \$10 for others.

Health experts said the program aimed at preventing disease before it occurred.

Public Health Advocacy Institute director Mike Daube said it sent a message to the community and would be cost efficient in the long run as fewer claims were made for treatment for preventable diseases.

HealthWay chairwoman Rosanna Capolingua said older people should have access to fitness classes at low or no cost because it improved their stability, reducing the chance of

falls.

"There are not enough of these sorts of programs," Dr Capolingua said. "The classes are often oversubscribed and it's hard to get patients into them, so this is fabulous."

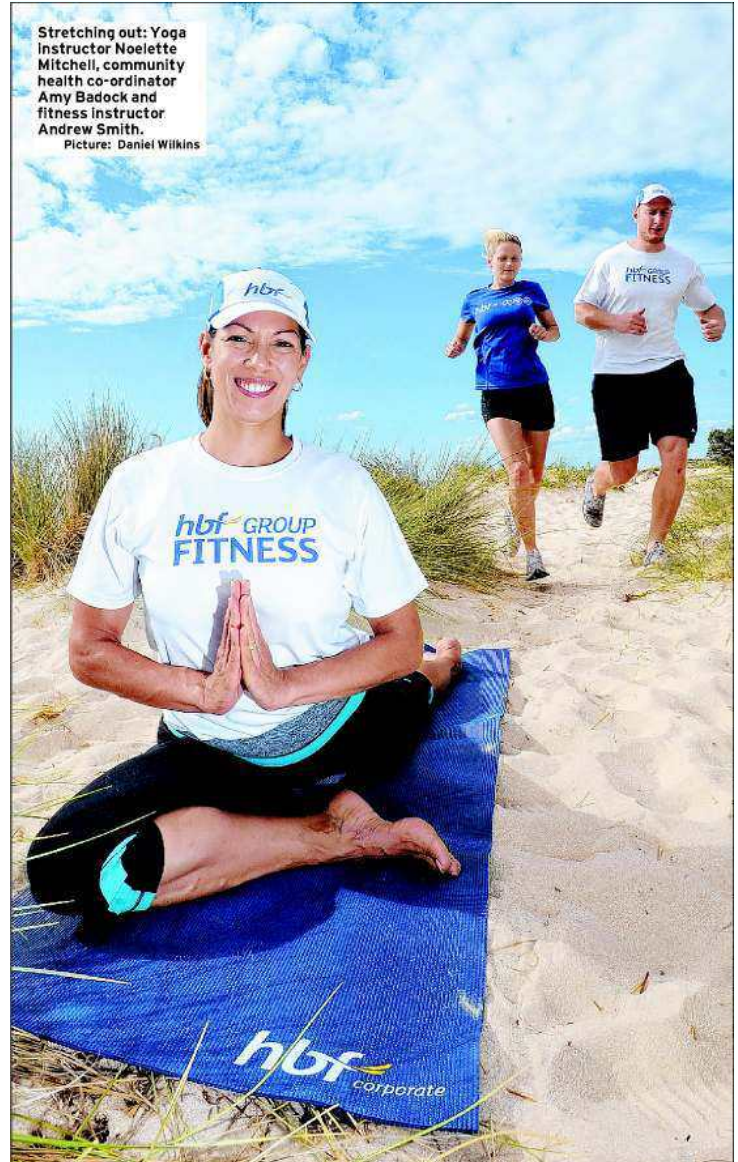
HBF managing director Rob Bransby said he was writing to local government authorities for permission to use public parks for classes.

"The idea is that it's an incentive for people to get fit for summer," Mr Bransby said.

"We want to be more than just a health insurer, but also get into wellness activities and help stop the onset of disease."

The classes would have three groups for people of low, medium or high fitness levels and include running, stretching and other exercises, such as sit-ups and push-ups.

Linda Cann



Stretching out: Yoga instructor Noelette Mitchell, community health co-ordinator Amy Badock and fitness instructor Andrew Smith.
Picture: Daniel Wilkins