

Get the right support

Whether you're small or larger chested, a sports bra is an important item of kit for all kinds of activities.

For high impact sports, such as running, a good quality bra is essential.

According to research, runners can expect their boobs to get shaken around by an average of 14cm in three directions – up, down, side to side, and forwards to back.

Any bounce has the potential to stretch the Cooper's ligaments – the ones that maintain the structural integrity of breasts – which do not recover once they are over-stretched.

But there is a solution, according to the study by University of Portsmouth, which found that a sports-specific bra can reduce movement by 78 per cent.

A good quality sports bra with a wicking, breathable fabric will also help to reduce sweat so you



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do not end up with chafing. Here are some top tips for buying the right bra.

What style of sports bra do I need?

The more intensive the sport, the more support you'll need. Crop tops, which compress the breasts against the chest, are generally fine for yoga and weight training and for A to C cup sizes.

Any exercise with a lot of movement, such as running or HIIT, or if you're a D cup or above, you're better going for a more traditional bra-shaped option, which tend to support rather than compress. However, there

are new designs and brands being created and some that seem less traditional can offer great support.

How can I tell if a sports bra fits?

The back band on a sports bra should be slightly firmer than your normal bra to provide you with enough support for your chosen sport. You should be able to get two fingers between your skin and the band at the side.

Ideally, pick a bra that fits correctly on its largest hooks, which gives you the scope to tighten if the elastic loosens over time.

Make sure that all your breast tissue sits inside the cup, or you risk bruising and chafing.

And regardless of how comfortable it might feel, six months to a year is the lifespan of a sports bra if you wear it regularly. Movement of exercise and washing will make it go baggy and lose support.

Below are five great styles.

CROP STARS

This style is great for A to C cup sizes and lower impact sports



Tried and tested:
A guide to buying the best sports bras

BELLUM ACTIVE LUXE CROP

£50, www.bellumactive.co.uk

This is a medium-to-high impact sports bra ideal for up to a C cup.

Sizes: XS (UK6) to L (UK12).

Features include: Sweat wicking, dynamic two-way stretch, moulded removable padding and funky colours and designs.

On test: It's a comfortable and supportive bra thanks to wide chest band and shoulders straps, plus a racer-style back.

This bra also looks great and could be worn on its own in sunny weather or at the gym.

There's a choice of extra padding, or simply remove them from the cups.

While light padding gives a flattering outline.

Level of support is fine for up to a C cup

The shoulder straps would be better if they were just a little bit wider.



MAAREE SOLIDARITY HIGH IMPACT

£59, www.maaree.com

A high-impact sports bra with a "world-first" adjustable Overband® for a tailored fit and support.

Sizes: 32C to 38F

Features include: Adjustable Overband; two-way shoulder straps; wide-set underband; padded and curved shoulder straps; wicking, fast-drying and breathable; strategically placed mesh panels.

On test: Brand new bra to the market with Overband technology that prevents breasts from going up, as well as down. Apparently, this is often overlooked by the mainstream bra manufacturers who are more concerned with keeping them up, rather than down.

The bra has adjustments on the side, which are for the overband, as well as a hook to bring the shoulder straps together to create a racer back.

The look is a bit "monoboob" but the support is excellent and comfort is good.



RUNDERWEAR RUNNING SUPPORT

£40, www.runderwear.co.uk

The brand states: "Runderwear Support Bra is designed specifically for runners looking for reduced bounce, maximum support and comfort".

Sizes: 28A to 38E.

Features include: Soft first layer against the skin; non-slip, adjustable soft-feel straps; adjustable J Hook straps with closure at the back for additional support and bounce reduction; moisture-wicking fabric; no labels; removable pads.

On test: The bra is comfortable and very supportive. I like the racer back for fit and support.

There is enough adjustment both at the back and shoulder straps to allow for a good but comfortable fit.

I like the attention to no-chafing detail such as a soft layer next to the skin and no labels.

Annoyingly, the removable pads fall out in the washing machine.



NEW BALANCE CAPTIVATE CROP

£50, www.newbalance.co.uk

New Balance states: "The Captivate Crop Bra elevates your workout ensemble with a next-level luxe feel".

Sizes: XS to XL

Features include: Performance knit fabric "with a bit of modern shine"; lower neckline; stylish strapping; medium impact support.

On test: The bra looks good both at front and back, while light padding gives a flattering outline.

You could wear this as a top on its own at the gym. Support is fine for up to a C cup and the wider chest band adds to the comfort. The shoulder straps would be better if they were wider.



OLDO COMFORT HIGH SPORTS

£40, www.odlo.com

Soft-to-the-touch yet structured for support, the High Comfort sports bra is "designed to boost comfort and confidence".

Sizes: 32A to 42F.

Features include: Soft stretch jersey fabric; adjustable, padded and crossable straps; a combination of seamless padded moulding technology (inner bra) and compression (outer bra top layer); and adjustable underbust width.

On test: The fabric is soft and comfortable straight away. The fit is flattering and supportive, especially with the cross back. The look is more like a traditional bra, which many larger chested women will welcome.

