

# FITNESS FEES UP

## Unhealthy 37% gym price rise

**ONE of Britain's biggest health clubs is putting a squeeze on members — with price hikes of up to 37 PER CENT.**

Thousands of **FITNESS FIRST** customers are fuming after being told of staggering increases in their monthly subscriptions.

And experts slammed the timing of the announcement — claiming it means anyone wanting to leave still has to fork out **TWO MONTHS'** fees.

The letters dropped just after the start of December — meaning clients have to wait until January before handing in their month's notice.

In a short statement, Fitness First — owned by private equity giants **BC PARTNERS** — said it was “committed to providing value for money”.

But it added: “The January VAT increase and rising running costs, together with a realignment of fees for existing members on lower historic rates, have led to varying price rises for some of our members.” The

Increase... Gamble



### HOW TO SPIN A BETTER DEAL

- **TRY before you buy:** Ask for introductory sessions before signing any contract.
- **READ small print:** Most customers are caught out by clauses they should have spotted.
- **HAGGLE:** Most gyms would rather offer a discount than let you walk out the door.
- **FRESH air:** You don't have to join a gym. Running is cheaper.

chain — which has 400,000 members across 195 clubs — refused to be drawn on the size of its price hikes.

But customers complaining to online watchdog **MONEY-SAVINGEXPERT** spoke of hikes of up to 37 per cent.

One said: “I could not believe my letter — a 2.5 per cent VAT rise has led to my price going from £26.95 a month to £36.95.”

Another complained: “Most people at my gym are in the same situation — signed up to two-year deals. Now Fitness First

is trying to raise prices and we have not had our two years.

“I urge everyone to write a letter to UK director John Gamble.” Others said their prices had gone up by only 60p a month.

Mr Gamble was unavailable yesterday.

Martin Lewis, Money-savingexpert founder, said: “It's the timing that gets me. It's at worst malicious and at best terribly inconvenient.”

Fitness First said: “We have ensured no member sees a basic monthly price increase of more than £9.95.”