



A Better Body in 2 Hours a Week

Follow our research-proven plan to get the most out of doing the least at the gym. BY JUDI KETTELER

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Pumping up your routine—adding intensity, trying new moves and giving 100 percent—does more than prevent workout boredom: It saves you a lot of time. “The thinking at the gym used to be, ‘Well, at least I’m here,’” says trainer Tom Holland, author of *The 12-Week Triathlete*. But if you want to see big results fast, the new catchphrase should be “Go hard and go home,” he adds.

Although the 2007 guidelines from the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) call for at least 30 minutes of exercise five or more days a week, they’re based on moderate activity (think brisk walking) and are geared toward general health benefits, explains Bill Haskell, Ph.D., a professor at the School of Medicine at Stanford University and lead author of the ACSM report. Kick things up a notch and the recommendation is for just 20 minutes of vigorous activity (see “How Hard Is Hard Enough?,” page 50, for examples) three times a week. Here’s how to work out smarter, not longer.

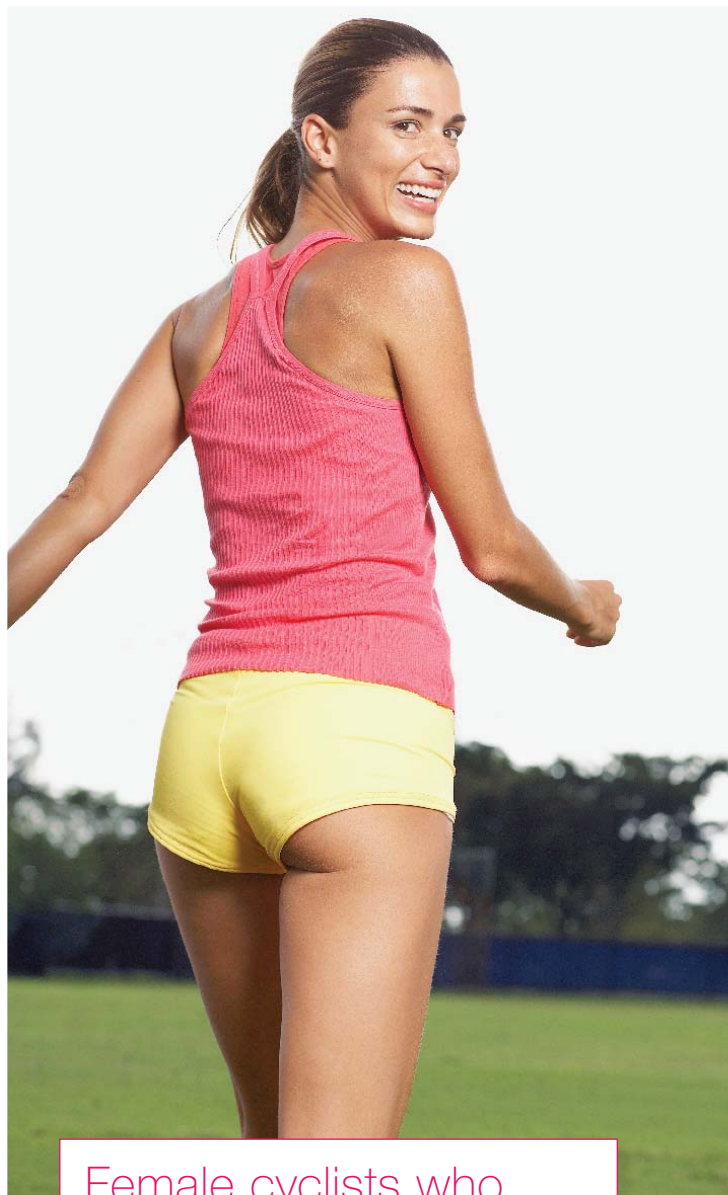
Try High-Speed Cardio

One of the best-documented ways to shrink both your time commitment and your waistline is to incorporate intervals into your cardio routine. During this kind of workout (where you push the intensity as close to your max as you can—an 8 or 9 on a scale of 1 to 10—for a short period of time), your muscles use more oxygen, increasing the amount of energy you spend, says Shawn Dolan, Ph.D., R.D., a professor of kinesiology at California State University at Long Beach. “In a 30-minute interval routine, you have the potential to burn a third more calories than you would just going at a steady pace,” she explains.

Interval training is also more effective at improving performance. Studies show that it increases both endurance and speed by improving the body’s ability to use oxygen. Healthy college-age subjects who did short, high-intensity cycling workouts for just two weeks were able to bike longer (51 minutes compared to 26 minutes) and faster than before, according to a recent study from McMaster University in Ontario.

Start to Circuit Train

“When lifting weights, make sure you’re constantly moving from one exercise to the next,” says Holland. This nonstop action, aka circuit training, burns about 25 percent more calories than traditional resistance workouts by keeping your heart rate elevated the entire time. One of the most efficient strategies is to perform moves that target multiple muscle groups simultaneously. “This is how our bodies work in everyday life—muscles are never isolated from one another when we move,” says Holland. “Plus, by keeping your body guessing about what exercise is coming next, your muscles don’t just automatically adapt to the routine without having to work hard.” For moves to try, see “The Perfect Circuit,” page 52—it should take 20 to 30 minutes. ►



Female cyclists who completed a high-intensity interval routine **burned 36% more fat post-workout** than they did before exercising, according to a recent study from the University of Guelph in Ontario.

Doing interval workouts 3 days a week may help improve your speed and performance. Runners who did this for 8 weeks increased their body's ability to use oxygen by 6% to 7%, according to a study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

Eat Like an Athlete

Whether you munch a cheeseburger, a bagel, an energy bar or absolutely nothing before and after you exercise has a big impact on how your body will respond. And we're not only talking about indigestion.

Just because your routine is short doesn't mean you don't need to fuel up first. "Make the meal you eat before your workout substantial [300 to 500 calories], so you'll have enough energy to maintain the higher intensity," says Molly Kimball, R.D., head of nutrition at Elmwood Fitness Center in New Orleans. She recommends at least a two-to-one ratio of complex carbs to protein (such as a whole-grain English muffin with a tablespoon of peanut butter and an apple, or a turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread with some baby carrots). If it's been a few hours since your last meal, have a snack before your workout for energy, but aim for something that's easy to digest (not too high in fiber or fat) with 100 to 200 calories, such as a cereal bar or a banana.

Eat a healthy mix of protein and carbs within 20 minutes after working out to help muscles recover, suggests Kimball. For example, drink a glass of low-fat chocolate milk or a fruit (strawberry, banana or blueberry) smoothie with plain, low-fat yogurt. Even though your first thought might be "I just burned a ton of calories so now I can eat whatever I want," hold back, says Kimball. The last thing you should do is over-indulge one day because you worked really hard and then fast the next (or vice versa)—caloric consistency is key to maintaining your weight or dropping a few pounds.

Rest Your Weary Bones

"Intervals and circuits are highly stressful on your body, so to prevent injury, each high-intensity day should be followed by at least one or two days of rest or light activity," says Holland. That's right—rest. Hurrah! But, sorry, that doesn't mean just planting yourself on the sofa. To prevent soreness, take a leisurely 30-minute walk or an easy bike ride to get blood flowing, says Dolan. In addition, pay attention to your pains. "You have microtrauma in your tissue after a hard workout, which causes inflammation," says Dolan. Indulge in an occasional massage or roll out on a foam roller (find one for about \$31 at optp.com) to speed recovery and help stretch the fascia—thin tissue that covers your muscles and muscle fibers and tightens up during and after exercise. ►

How Hard Is Hard Enough?

Scientists define "vigorous" activity as anything with a metabolic equivalent (MET) intensity level greater than 6.0. Your MET can range from 0.9 (sleeping) to 18 (running at 10.9 mph—a 5.5-minute mile). Try working these vigorous activities into your routine.

- **Running** Add some stairs and boost the burn by about 90 percent.
- **Biking** Cruising around doesn't count. You've gotta be doing at least 12 mph.
- **Step aerobics** One set of risers (6 to 8 inches) is plenty to get your heart rate pumping.
- **Jumping rope** It doesn't matter how fast—just keep jumping. If you're not feeling coordinated, ditch the rope and circle your arms.
- **Boxing** Want to get more out of it? Imagine that the punching bag is your ex-boyfriend.
- **Tennis** Lose the partner. A game of singles burns about 33 percent more calories than doubles.
- **Soccer** Playing goalie? Jog in place during the game (that is, when the ball's not coming your way).
- **Swimming laps** Try alternating strokes between butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle to maximize your calorie burn.
- **Backpacking** Carry more than 10 pounds and you'll blast about 7 percent more calories.
- **Canoeing** You don't have to be an expert, but try to row at 4 mph or faster.
- **Mountain climbing** Not the adventurous type? Walk hard up a big set of stairs and get about the same heart-pumping (though not as thrilling) effect.
- **Roller-skating** Pick up a pair of inline skates instead—you'll up the intensity by about 71 percent.

THAT'S INTENSE! Your 30-Minute Total-Body Plan

Think you don't have time to exercise? Think again. Take these three fast, no-fail routines with you wherever you go. No excuses!

2.4

Number of hours women, on average, spend watching TV per day

15

About how many minutes of commercials air during a one-hour TV show

12

Minutes it takes to burn 100 calories jumping rope (slowly)

171

Number of calories burned in a 20-minute circuit

48

Percentage of women who sacrifice exercise when sleepy or pressed for time

The Perfect Circuit

WHAT YOU'LL NEED: A pair of 5- to 8-pound dumbbells. (The last few reps of each move should be really difficult, so increase weight as needed.)

Warm up (walk on treadmill, bike slowly, march in place) for five minutes. Then complete one set of the following:

- **24 alternating lunges with biceps curls**, holding a dumbbell in each hand
- **20 plié squats**, feet turned out to sides, knees behind toes, holding a dumbbell in each hand. As you squat, raise arms straight out in front of chest. Lower arms as you lift back up.
- **Two 45-second plank holds**, hands below shoulders, abs engaged, back straight; lift one leg each time
- **20 alternating reverse lunges**, holding a dumbbell in each hand. As you lunge back, lift arms straight out to sides at shoulder



height, palms down. Lower arms as you stand up.

- **20 squats**, holding a dumbbell in each hand. As you squat, press dumbbells straight overhead, palms facing forward. Lower arms as you lift back up.
 - **1 to 3 minutes of cardio** (such as jogging in place, doing jumping jacks or jumping rope)
- Rest for 1 minute, then do another set, switching up the order of the exercises.

Two Must-Try Intervals (each burns 300 to 350 calories)

1. SHORT, HARD INTERVAL (27 minutes)

- **Warm-up** (10 minutes) Light cardio (a brisk walk/jog or an easy ride on the stationary bike): RPE 4–5*
- **Speed burst** (2 minutes) Pick up pace: RPE 8–9
- **Recover** (1 minute) Slow down to a moderate pace: RPE 3
- **Repeat sequence** 3 more times
- **Cooldown** (5 minutes) Light cardio: RPE 4–5

2. TEMPO INTERVAL (30 minutes)

This tempo workout is like doing one long interval at a fairly high intensity—you should be able to speak, but not engage in lengthy conversation. Try doing it with any of your favorite types of cardio, such as running, cycling or walking.

- **Warm-up** (15 minutes)
- **Hard pace** (10 minutes)
- **Cooldown** (5 minutes)

*RPE is your Rate of Perceived Exertion, on a scale of 1 to 10.