

Exercising Without Equipment

To maintain optimal health and fitness levels, you do not need a gym membership. Truth be told, you do not need any equipment. In fact, your body alone is the perfect tool to help you accomplish your goals. You can use your total body weight workout to burn fat, tone muscle, increase strength and improve your overall health.

Starting This Program

Perform this program two to three times per week with at least one day (24 hours) of rest between workouts. When starting the program complete each exercise or stretch for the number of repetitions and sets listed, resting between each set before moving to the next exercise. To increase intensity and burn more calories, perform this workout as a circuit, completing repetitions of each exercise without resting. Once you've done one set of each exercise, rest for two minutes then repeat the entire circuit one or two more times.

Remember to gradually add a challenging amount of weight to benefit from any strength exercise. If you do not challenge your muscles, you will not benefit from strength training. The exercises should feel somewhere between hard and very hard for you to lift or push the weight. It should not feel too arduous. If you can not lift or push a weight 12 times in a row, it is too heavy for you for this exercise plan. Reduce the amount of weight. If you can lift more than 20 times in a row, it is too light for you. Increase the amount of weight.

Check with your doctor before you begin any type of exercise program.

Warm-up

Perform a general cardiovascular warm-up with five to ten minutes of aerobic exercise such as walking, jumping jacks or walking up and down the stairs. Then perform the prone cobra exercise and the horse stance horizontal exercise each one time then repeat the sequence one to two more times.

- **Prone cobra**
 - Lay face down arms at sides. Raise your body off the ground using your low back muscles and contracting your butt muscles. Once up use your lower back to hold your body up, turn your arms outward and point the thumbs toward the sky. Squeeze your shoulder blades together. Keep your chin tucked and hold the position for 30 seconds or less, according to your ability, and return to a comfortable resting position.
- **Horse stance horizontal**

- Start on all fours, hands under your shoulders, and hips at ninety degrees to your body. Bend your elbows until your body is parallel to the floor. Lift an arm out at a forty-five-degree angle to your body thumb pointed up. Next, lift the opposite leg out until parallel to the floor. Hold for ten seconds and repeat with the opposite arm and leg.

Workout

Couple the exercises together in the order they are listed. For example, perform one set of squats and then one set of lunges. Go back to the squats for the second set followed again by the lunge. Keep alternating the two exercises until the desired amount of sets are completed before moving on to the next two exercises.

- **Squat**
 - Stand feet shoulder-width apart. Extend your arms in front of your body to help with balance. Bend your hips and knees to lower your body. Keep your heels on the floor and make sure that your knees are tracking over your feet. Do not round your lower back. To go up, squeeze your butt muscles together and push your hips forward. Follow the same path when going down. Perform twelve to twenty repetitions.
- **Lunge**
 - Stand with feet hip-width apart and take a big step forward. Lower your body allowing your back knee to almost touch the floor. Pause then come back up. In the bottom position, your front leg shin should be perpendicular to the ground. If the knee of your front leg is coming out over the toes then step farther out. Your front knee should also be tracking over your front foot, do not allow it to fall in or out. Keep your body upright throughout the movement. After completing the set switch legs. Perform 12 to 20 repetitions.
- **Push up**
 - Lay face down on the floor with your hands resting under your shoulders. Push up with your arms lifting your body off the floor. You may move the hands slightly in any direction to make it more comfortable. Lower and repeat. Perform 12 to 20 repetitions.
- **Glute bridge**
 - Lay face up on your back with bent knees, feet flat on the floor and hip-width apart. Contract stomach muscles to flatten your lower back into the floor. Lift hips off the floor. Avoid pushing your hips too high and arch your back. Hold for a second then lower yourself back to the starting position. Perform 12 to 20 repetitions.
- **Front plank**
 - Lie on the floor face down with your elbows close to your sides and directly under your shoulders, palms down and fingers facing forward. Pull your belly button to your spine and hold. Slowly lift your body off the floor. Keep body and legs rigid. Do not allow your ribcage or lower back to sink toward the floor. Avoid hips in the air and bending your knees. Keep your shoulders pushed down and away from your ears. Hold for five to 20 seconds while continuing to breathe normally. Slowly and gently lower your body back toward the floor. If you experience any pain in the lower back, stop the exercise immediately.
- **Turkish get up**
 - Lay face up on the floor with a weight over your body with one arm. Straighten your elbow. Slowly stand up while keeping the weight vertical and your arm straight. Slowly reverse the motion. Keep your eyes on the weight at all times. If you begin to lose it drop the weight and get

out of the way. Keep the weight light until you get the motion down. This is a tough exercise but will be a favorite once you get the movement down pat. Perform 12 to 20 repetitions.

Cool-down

Perform all three exercises once, then repeat the sequence one to two more times.

- **Standing hamstring stretch**
 - Cross legs while standing, knees soft (slight bend), toes pointing straight ahead. Bend forward at your hips and touch your toes. Hold 30 seconds.
- **Kneeling superman reach**
 - Kneel on the floor. Sit back moving your butt toward your heels with arms extending out in front of your body, elbows straight and palms pressing down into the floor. Feel mild tension through your upper arms and shoulders.
- **Abdominal stretch**
 - Lie on the floor with your back straight. Stretch your toes forward while reaching your hands and fingers above your head in the opposite direction. Hold for 30 seconds.

Resources

- President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: www.fitness.gov
- American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org
- National Institutes of Health: www.nih.gov

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