

16 fast no-gym workouts

Busy? No problem. Match exercise to the time you can spare and see results – from a flatter tummy to firmer legs – in 20 minutes or less.



Think you have to run or walk for a significant period of time to get results? Good news. Research shows that short bursts of exercise actually burn more fat. Interval training is a method of exercise that uses alternating periods of high intensity work and rest. “Scientists at the University of New South Wales have discovered that interval training may burn three times more body fat than when you exercise at a steady pace,” says fitness editor Martha Lourey-Bird. The UNSW researchers found that during intense bursts the body produces a chemical reaction that burns more fat. The study, which involved 45 women in two groups, had one group riding a stationary bike steadily for 40 minutes. The other exercised for 20 minutes at a time, but alternated sprinting with easy pedalling. After doing that three times a week for 15 weeks, the interval exercisers lost three times as much body fat as the steadily paced group.

Interval training usually involves anaerobic or high intensity exercise, as opposed to aerobic exercise such as long distance steady jogging. When we expend more energy in a short space of time, we continue to burn more kilojoules even after we’ve stopped working out as the body has to restore its pre-exercise state – another added benefit of anaerobic exercise. “Essentially your engine stays revving higher for longer after the exercise; you continue to burn more energy after anaerobic activity than aerobic,” says exercise physiologist Jarrod Meerkin.

Don’t have a whole hour to exercise? No problem. Read on for 16 quick (but effective) workouts, which involve anaerobic exercise and interval training, you can try anywhere, anytime.

Safety tip

To decrease the chance of injury and improve performance, remember to warm-up and cool-down, no matter how short your workout is. A brisk walk before and stretching the muscles used after can achieve this.

1 Strength circuit

Time it takes: 10 minutes

How it’s done: Choose three exercises such as dumbbell bench presses, alternating lunges and abdominal crunches and do 10–12 reps in sets of 6–8. Work continuously for 10 minutes alternating between each exercise without a rest in between. Alternately, you can perform five rounds of 6–8 reps as fast as possible.

The benefits: Strengthens all the large muscle groups.



The heart pumper

Time it takes: 2 minutes

How it’s done: Create a circuit of cardio workouts with 15 seconds spent on each and 15 seconds rest in between each. You can perform multiple rounds with different exercises. Here’s an example: push-ups for 15 seconds; tuck jumps for 15 seconds; lunges for 15 seconds; skipping for 15 seconds.

The benefits: “This is a pretty intense workout but it can be done easily without any equipment,” says exercise physiologist Jarrod Meerkin. “It relies on improving your cardiovascular fitness but will also improve your muscle strength. You should be breathless after this, but your body will recover quickly because it’s a relatively short workout.”

3 Triple blaster

Time it takes: 18 minutes

How it’s done: Choose some hand weights that you can lift 10 times, with the 10th rep being the hardest to complete. Perform as many reps as possible at a constant speed for 60 seconds. Rest for 15–30 seconds and perform another exercise. Have a go with these samples:

- Barbell or dumbbell lunge, left and right legs, 60 seconds
- Barbell or dumbbell overhead push presses, 60 seconds
- Push-ups, 60 seconds

Repeat three times for an 18-minute workout routine.

The benefits: “Research has shown that short bursts of energy, or anaerobic exercise, which does not require the body to work on oxygen burns more fat,” says Meerkin.

4 The broom and flex

Time it takes: 2 minutes

How it’s done: Hold a broom handle behind your neck, sitting across the most muscular part of your shoulders, with your hands either side holding the handle.

- Firstly, with your feet shoulder-width apart and firm on the floor, twist side to side feeling a stretch in your spine.
- Secondly, bend to your right and left with the end of the handle pointing to the outside of your ankle as it lowers.
- Finally, bend at the waist and lean forward towards your toes, gently arching your back.

Do these exercises slowly until you feel a gentle stretch and do each movement 10 times.

The benefits: “Flexibility is key to maintaining mobility, and preventing injury,” says exercise physiologist Chris Sinclair.

5 Hippy sit-ups

Time it takes: 10 minutes

How it’s done: Lie on your back with your knees up, feet flat on the floor and hands on your hips. Raise your hips so your bottom comes off the floor, aiming to create a straight line between your knees and shoulders. Hold for five seconds, and lower bottom back to the floor. Repeat 10 times. Return to the starting position, placing hands on thighs. Slowly curl up, lifting your shoulders off the ground and running your hands towards the knees. Do this gently, focusing on using your tummy muscles. Repeat 10 times. Perform both exercises twice.

The benefits: A strong core region, consisting of your abdominals and lower back muscles, is important to prevent lower back pain and maintain good posture.

6 Wonder walker

Time it takes: 20 minutes

How it’s done: Begin walking at a normal pace until you walk past three lampposts. Increase walking speed to a brisk pace past another three posts. Return to normal pace and alternate with brisk walking every three posts. You should be able to talk when walking at a normal pace, but just unable to do so when you’re walking briskly. For variety, modify the number of lampposts between the two speeds.

The benefits: This exercise strengthens your heart and improves the effectiveness and health of your lungs.



7 Lounge room workout

Time it takes: 5 minutes

How it's done: Using the back of your lounge, place hands shoulder-width apart. Your feet should be 60–80cm from the lounge. Keeping your body straight, slowly lower your chest to

the lounge. Make sure you don't stick your chin out or lift your shoulders but keep them in and down. Repeat 10 times. If this is too easy for you, try doing them on a table. If that's too easy, move to the floor and do push-ups on your knees.

The benefits: According to exercise physiologist Christine Armarego, "This exercise improves your chest and arm strength, as well as ensuring your core muscles do their fair share of work by keeping your body straight."

8 Swiss ball marching

Time it takes: 5 minutes

How it's done: Lying on your back with your feet up on top of a Swiss ball with arms on the ground by your side, slowly raise your hips off the ground until your whole body is straight. Holding this position, gently raise one leg off the ball a few centimetres and then gently let it down. Repeat movement with the other leg. Alternate between legs until you've completed five lifts on each leg. When you're finished, slowly lower your hips to the ground and rest.

The benefits: "This exercise benefits your core stability, your gluteals or backside muscles, as well as ensuring that you have good dynamic stability – that your core is stable while you're moving," says Armarego.

9 The stair strider

Time it takes: 10 minutes

How it's done: Firstly, run or walk the stairs as fast as you can. Then, slow down and lengthen your stride by taking the stairs two at a time. Alternate these intervals of fast and slow for one minute each for 10 minutes.

The benefits: "This is a great cardio workout that targets your leg and bottom muscles," says *Weight Watchers* magazine fitness editor Martha Lourey-Bird. "You'll definitely feel it the next day. For great results, do this workout once a week."

10 DIY pool fitness

Time it takes: 10 minutes

How it's done: Choose the stroke you're most comfortable with. Do one lap of just kicking for that stroke using a kickboard, then one lap of just arms and follow with a lap of the full stroke. If you're a good swimmer, make it two laps of the full stroke. Then repeat this process four times.

The benefits: "Completing these simple yet effective drills helps you improve your stroke efficiency, works your lungs and burns body fat as well," says Armarego.

11 At-home arm tone

Time it takes: 5–10 minutes

How it's done: Rather than wasting time travelling to a gym, use household items to tone your arms.

- **Bottled biceps** – Use 1 litre water bottles to do bicep curls doing three sets of 8–12 reps or until the muscles fatigue.
- **Grab a bag** – Get a green re-useable grocery bag and fill it with books to a weight you find comfortable to lift. With straight arms, hold the handle with both hands in front of your knees. Make sure your back is straight, your feet firmly on the ground and your knees slightly bent. Raise the bag gently to chest level, keeping your arms straight, then lower to start position. Do three sets of 8–12 upright rows.

The benefits: "This is a great way to get an effective and convenient muscular endurance workout," says Lourey-Bird. "Try to do each exercise to fatigue and if you can do more than 25 reps, then you need to make the exercise harder."

12 Medicine ball bonus

Time it takes: 10–15 minutes

How it's done: Do 'slams' for the upper body where you throw the ball down as hard as possible and catch it again. Next, do squats for the lower body, squeezing the ball between your knees. Then do twists for your mid-region where you twist from side to side holding the ball. Do 1–3 sets of 12 reps for each exercise two to four times a week.

The benefits: "This exercise gives you a cardio and strength challenge at the same time," says Lourey-Bird. "Start with a light ball and build up your technique, making sure it's correct at all times. This will mean you can keep the movements swift and effective."

13 Tummy toner

Time it takes: 5–10 minutes

How it's done: Try these three

effective yet simple exercises for your different abdominal and core muscles:

- **Half crunches for upper abs** – Lying on your back with knees bent up, lift and lower your shoulder blades.
- **Reverse curls for lower abs** – Lying on your back lift and lower your bottom off the ground, raising bent knees up to the ceiling.
- **Static plank for core** – Lay face down on your forearms on the floor. Breathe in and lift your chest and tummy up off the ground, lowering your bottom to keep your back plank-like. As you breathe out, bring your belly button up towards your spine and hold.

Alternate the exercises, increasing the time for each. If you start with 30 seconds, build up to one continuous minute or more and repeat 3–5 times.

The benefits: "Try this routine every second day and your abdominal muscles and core should respond by getting stronger and firmer," says Lourey-Bird.

14 Bulgarian lunges

Time it takes: 5 minutes

How it's done: Assume a lunge position, placing your back foot on something elevated such as a step, bench or chair. Keep your legs shoulder-width apart, with your head and back straight. Start the movement by bending the front leg and letting the back knee lower slowly down towards the ground, making sure your front knee stays above the foot. The front leg does most of the work but you'll feel some effort on the back leg's upper thigh. Start with eight reps on each leg and build up to 15. Do reps on one side, then the other.

The benefits: "This exercise helps tone your legs and strengthens your hip flexors," says Armarego, "so your ability to lift your legs will be better and walking and running easier and safer for your back."

15 Easy interval running

Time it takes: 10 minutes

How it's done: For the first minute, run at a comfortable pace or 45 per cent of your maximum effort. For

the second minute, run 45 seconds at a comfortable pace and 15 seconds at a fast pace or 85–100 per cent of your maximum effort. Then follow this ratio:

- 40 seconds comfortable, 20 seconds fast
- 35 seconds comfortable, 25 seconds fast
- 30 seconds comfortable, 30 seconds fast
- 30 seconds comfortable, 30 seconds fast
- 35 seconds comfortable, 25 seconds fast
- 40 seconds comfortable, 20 seconds fast
- 45 seconds comfortable, 15 seconds fast

Finally, run at the comfortable pace to cool down.

The benefits: Mixed intensity running improves your cardiovascular health as well as strengthening legs.

16 The split jumper

Time it takes: 10 minutes

How it's done: If you feel that regular lunges just don't cut it anymore, try this:

- **Split jumps.** Starting in a lunge position with your left leg forward, lower the back or right leg, bringing the knee just above the floor. Push gently through both legs and jump upwards. In midair, switch feet so that you land in the opposite lunge position. Aim for 8–12 jumps each set and do two to three sets. Increase the number of jumps as the split jumps become easier.

The benefits: "If you're looking to tighten and tone your glutes, hamstrings and thighs, as well as improving your aerobic fitness, this is the one," says trainer Rob Griffiths. 

