



GET FIT *at home*

Are monthly fees and sweaty strangers putting you off the gym? Then create your own at home. **David Goding** reports.

When you think about being at home, you most likely conjure up a haven for rest and relaxation, not a forum for fitness. Yet, with just a little expert advice, it can be both of these environments.

Home versus gym

According to Dr Gordon Lynch, founder of Fitness 2 Live and a University of Melbourne professor of physiology, there are many benefits to working out at home. “Many people are hard pressed for time or simply can’t get to a gym. Other people find the gym a little intimidating and just don’t feel comfortable exercising there,” explains Lynch. When you exercise at home, you can also work out at a pace that suits you, there’s no waiting around to use equipment and you don’t pay any fees!

Getting started

Equipment: You don’t need to buy a new exercise wardrobe or blow the budget on fancy equipment to get set up – loose, light, comfortable clothes, well-fitting shoes and a handtowel are all the basics you really need. If you want to invest in some inexpensive home-exercise equipment, resistance bands, medicine balls and Swiss balls are all excellent options. “Resistance bands can be anchored to the door for shoulder strengthening exercises and from the door to the foot to strengthen the lower body,” says Dr Jason Bennie, exercise physiologist at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute. “Swiss

balls and medicine balls are a great way to develop your core strength.”

Nutrition: To get the most from your workout, you need adequate fuel and hydration. “For sustained energy during exercise, eat a low-GI meal before exercising,” says Dr Peter Fricker, director of the Australian Institute of Sport. “You shouldn’t require extra fluids for 30 minutes of moderate exercise, unless it results in considerable sweating.” Instead, says Dr Fricker, replace fluids after exercise, but avoid products containing caffeine. If you sweat a lot, high-carbohydrate sports drinks may be beneficial, but keep tabs on the extra calories in them.

Schedule: Start by scheduling your fitness three days a week. If you’re new to exercise, ease into it by starting with ten minutes each day, then work your way up to a full half hour. Give yourself a day’s rest in between each workout. Put up exercise reminders on your fridge to help prompt you into action.

Building a workout

One of the best places to begin is with free-form exercise, which will ease you into working out on your own. “Push-ups, sit-ups, chair dips, and using basic free weights are all excellent strength exercises,” says Dr Bennie. “You could start with three sets of ten push-ups followed by two or three sets of lunges and step ups. Skipping is another great exercise, since it’s high intensity and good for cardio fitness.” You can also

The virtual gym trend

Interactive video games, such as Wii Fit, can add an additional element to your workout, provided you play one of the more physically active games. According to a recent study published in the *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* journal, approximately one third (or 22 of the current 68 games) rate as medium-intensity activities, which can be justifiably included as part of your daily allotment of physical exercise.

try jogging on the spot for several minutes. Once you’re comfortable performing these exercises, combine them into a complete circuit workout, suggests Dr Jarrod Meerkin from Exercise and Sports Science Australia. “Complete 30 seconds for each exercise, followed by a 30-second recovery,” he advises. “Start with ten minutes, three days a week, then work up towards 30 minutes over a three-month period.” To boost your fitness further, turn the page to see fitness editor Martha Lourey-Bird’s free-form exercise plan.

Staying motivated

Working out at home is convenient, but kids, visitors and phone calls can all prove distracting. Plan exercise for a time when distractions are at a minimum. “A spare bedroom can prove handy,” says Dr Lynch. “Your garage is another potential gym area where you can get privacy.” Home exercise doesn’t have to be solo either. “Exercise with your partner or, if the kids are home, include them, too,” adds Dr Lynch.

FACT

Originally called Pezzi balls, Swiss balls were first used in the 1960s as physical therapy for newborns.

cream of the crop

Try these delicious and simple meal suggestions using Weight Watchers Cream Cheese.

1 For an extra creamy, indulgent twist on your weekend breakfast of scrambled eggs, add Weight Watchers Cream Cheese to beaten eggs, chopped chives and lean bacon. Cook until soft curds form.

2 Create a satisfying weekday lunch with a healthy Weight Watchers Cream Cheese, turkey, cranberry and iceberg lettuce wholegrain wrap.

3 Next time friends or family pop in unexpectedly, you can create a delicious dip in seconds by blending together chopped semi sun-dried tomatoes, a generous serving of Weight Watchers Cream Cheese, fresh chives and garlic. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

4 It's easy to enjoy healthy bacon and egg muffins. Simply spread Weight Watchers Cream Cheese on a halved, toasted English muffin, then top with one poached egg, grilled lean bacon, a couple of English spinach leaves and salt-reduced sauce.



Your home WORKOUT GUIDE

Get slim without the gym! Fitness editor Martha Lourey-Bird reveals how to create the ideal at-home workout.

Walking lunges

EQUIPMENT: 2 full buckets of water

TARGETS: Lower body (legs & butt)

Hold a bucket filled with water in each hand and keep your shoulders back and stay upright. Leading with your heel, take a big step forward, then bend both knees as you lunge down towards the ground. Your front knee should be above your ankle and your back knee should be just above the floor. Push up through your front heel and straighten your knees again. Rather than stepping back into the starting position between each lunge, take another big step forward with your opposite leg so you're moving forwards, one lunge at a time, in the manner of an exaggerated walk.

Upright rows

EQUIPMENT: 1 bag of books

TARGETS: Shoulders & upper back

Hold the straps of a bag weighted down with a few books and stand with your feet hip-distance apart and knees slightly bent. Start with your hands together in front of you and your arms straight. Raise your bent elbows towards the ceiling and lift your hands to the top of your chest bone. Slowly lower the bag back down again to the start position. Repeat, keeping your chin tucked in (to avoid neck strain) and your movements controlled throughout.

Wide squats

EQUIPMENT: 1 cushion

TARGETS: Lower body (legs & butt)

Step astride a cushion so your feet are wider than shoulder-width apart and your toes are pointing outwards. To perform the squat, bend your knees and hips so you feel a stretch along your inner thigh muscles. Keep your heels pressed into the floor, your chest open and your knees above your ankles. Squeeze your bottom as you slowly straighten your knees, then return to the starting position and repeat.

Tricep dips

EQUIPMENT: 1 sturdy chair

TARGETS: Back of your upper arms

Support your body weight with both hands behind you on the back of a chair, bending your knees. Bend at the elbows as you lower your bottom to just above the floor. Keep your back straight and close to your hands at all times. Straighten your elbows in between each 'dip' to return to the starting position.

Narrow squats

EQUIPMENT: 1 broomstick

TARGETS: Lower body (legs & butt)

Hold the broomstick across your shoulders and stand with your feet parallel and directly underneath your shoulders. Each time you perform the squat, bend your legs towards a 90-degree angle at the knees and lower your bottom as if you were going to sit into a chair. Keep your weight evenly distributed through your heels and your knees directly above your ankles. Squeeze your bottom on the way back up again as you straighten your legs to return to the starting position.

Bicep curls

EQUIPMENT: 2 large bottles of water

TARGETS: Front of your upper arms

Holding bottles of water in each hand, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent. Keep arms tucked in by your side, bend your elbows and slowly raise your fists to shoulder height. Slowly straighten your arms to return to the starting position.

Step ups

EQUIPMENT: 1 bench/step and a bottle

TARGETS: Lower body (legs & butt)

Lead with your heel and pump your arms as you step up onto something sturdy between ankle and knee height. Your whole foot should fit on the step. Keep the movement continuous, leading with your toes as you step down. **WW**