

boost your

FITNESS RESULTS

A flatter tummy – minus the crunches. A workout that works, but isn't boring. Done! Fitness editor **Martha Lourey-Bird** answers your top seven questions.

1 I want a flatter belly without doing hundreds of crunches. Is there another way to tone up?

Yes! Many people believe that endless sit-ups are the only option. In reality, these 'moving' resistance exercises strengthen the abdominal muscles under body fat, but have little effect on the way you look. Cardio exercise will help with overall fat reduction, but if you want to tone your tummy, try doing 'non-moving' exercises like the plank, performed on knees or toes. Keep forearms in contact with the floor, your back flat and lift your bellybutton towards your spine. Hold for one minute. Not only does this strengthen abs, it dramatically improves posture, giving the appearance of flatter, tighter abs instantly.

2 I want to use the swimming pool to get fit without having to swim laps. What other exercises can I do?

To some, swimming laps sounds about as interesting as a three-hour lecture on the origin of spark plugs.

But exercising in the pool definitely doesn't have to be tedious. Mix it up with water walking or jogging forwards, backwards and sideways, using kickboards, noodles and aqua weights or swimming a mix of freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke and side-stroke. You could also try setting yourself a target time to do continuous laps, for example, 10 minutes at first, or a target number of laps to do continuously, for example, five laps at first. Try to do these laps continuously but vary how you do them so you can achieve your allocated goal. It doesn't matter how you do it, as long as you keep moving and try to increase your time or laps as your fitness level improves – and your weight drops. If the idea of laps still puts you off, consider a class instead. Most gyms and pools offer a range of aqua-aerobics classes, including Aqua-Boxing and Aqua-Step, which are full-body workouts.

4 I want to tone up but don't want to pile on muscle. How do I stop myself from looking like Arnie?

Trust us, this isn't a problem for the majority of women. The best way to tone up is by doing resistance exercises. As well as toning your physique, resistance work builds strong muscles and bones, increases metabolism and improves overall body shape and posture. As the name suggests, resistance exercises involve resisting against some form of weight, such as your own body weight, a pin-loaded machine, free weights, resistance bands, kettle bells or buckets of water. To improve tone, try doing regular Pump or circuit classes and/or specific resistance exercises like push-ups, squats, chin ups and lunges. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends resistance training at least twice a

3 I want to try yoga but don't have time to attend classes. Can I do it solo at home?

Congratulations on deciding to give yoga a try. Not only is it a great way to increase your strength and flexibility, it's also been proven to help manage stress, as well as reduce elevated heart rate and blood pressure. When getting started, it's always best to seek out a beginner's class or book a one-on-one session with a qualified instructor. The reason? For maximum results, it's important to be able to do each pose correctly in order to reap their full benefits. Once you're more familiar with yoga, you can start doing it solo at home with help from books, DVDs or websites such as www.yogabasics.com.

5 I want to start exercising, but I'm so not an early morning person. When's the best time?

The best time to exercise is the time that's right for you. If you aren't a morning person, then there's no point planning to exercise before 9am because you won't stick with it. The best way to keep up any exercise program is to make sure it's convenient and enjoyable. Think about lunchtime fitness options, such as a 30-minute express circuit at the gym, a yoga or Pilates class, swimming laps or a brisk walk. Or consider evening options like team sports or a running group.

week, including one to three sets of eight to 10 different exercises to target all major muscle groups. You won't pile on muscle if you follow this advice, since you won't be lifting very heavy weights or training like a body builder. It's actually quite difficult to bulk up, so don't let that fear stop you.

6 I want to get fit by walking, but don't want to get bored. Any suggestions?

Not only is walking cheap, accessible and effective, every step you take counts towards your daily total. A healthy adult should be taking 10,000 steps a day. This equates to 8km or about 1 hour and 40 minutes. You can accumulate this in bouts of 10 minutes or do it in one hit. For variety, spice it up by walking with a friend, listening to music or podcasts, using a pedometer, changing routes regularly or just walking somewhere scenic. Challenge yourself by changing the terrain – from grass to sand and road to hills. At the same time, change the intensity by including intervals of speed, such as speed walking, for five or 10 minutes, then strolling for one.

7

I want to join a gym but can't face being judged. How can I gain more confidence?

The best way to overcome this is to pick a place that makes you feel comfortable, such as an all-men's or all-women's gym. Firstly, ensure the gym is located near your work or home, that members are people you can relate to, the staff are friendly and qualified and that it offers classes and/or equipment that interest you.

You could also take a gym buddy along to keep you motivated. Working out with a trainer gives you a more personalised and private workout, but if this isn't feasible, exercise at a time when the gym isn't crowded, like the middle of the day or late Saturday afternoon. If you're new to exercise, try a beginner's class, as everyone will be at a similar level. [www](http://www.weightwatchers.com.au)