

fitness

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“Can I really tone up in 30 minutes?!”

and more top fitness questions answered, so you know exactly how to turn your body into a success story.

BY CAREY ROSSI

get fit



Blast more calories during your run/walk workout by upping the incline on your treadmill rather than keeping it flat.



Equinox Fitness Club's Inkaflexx class uses body bars suspended from the ceiling to give participants total-body results.

of sorts that connects your upper body to your lower body,” says Cedric Bryant, Ph.D., chief science officer for the American Council on Exercise.

Try: Making gravity work against you while you work out; this gives you more belly-toning benefits. Lying on your stomach, place your feet on a low step or bench, lift one leg toward the ceiling, and perform a push-up. At your gym, look for fun suspension-training classes, where you exercise with your upper or lower half supported from above by super-durable straps (see photo at left). An at-home version of the TRX Suspension Trainer (\$150; fitnessanywhere.com) simply latches onto the top of a door-jamb. Slip your feet into the stirrups from a full push-up position and do knees-to-chest tucks, or grasp a stirrup in each hand and lean forward to do chest presses with added instability. “Every exercise is total body, so you’re really toning all over with each rep,” says Todd Durkin, owner of Fitness Quest 10 gym in San Diego.

Finally, don’t forget to mix in some heart-healthy cardio. “You can have a perfect six-pack, but no one will ever see it if you’ve got a layer of fat covering it up,” says FITNESS advisory board member Len Kravitz, Ph.D., coordinator of exercise science at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Run, walk briskly, swim, dance, or bike for at least 30 minutes five times a week.

2 “I want a flat belly but can’t bear to do another crunch. Help!”

Smart solution: “Do planks, push-ups and almost anything on a stability ball. These moves activate your transversus abdominis—the deepest abdominal muscle; its fibers run horizontally across your belly—to create a strong, flat, muscular girdle

3 “How can I trim—and boost—my butt for good?”

Smart solution: Your best lower-body fix is cardio on an incline to burn and firm. “It requires you to extend your hips, which naturally works your glutes,” Bryant says. Plus, tackling a killer hill routine sculpts your legs and deiggles your behind. At a 15 percent incline, you’ll burn about 60 percent more calories running and 150 percent more calories walking than you would hoofing it on a flat surface.

Try: Jumping on a stepmill (that revolving staircase at the gym) or hitting the stairs—they provide steeper climbs, the same as a 62 percent grade on a treadmill, Bryant says. “Even step-ups on a bench or taking a hilly hike will help.” To get the most out of your treadmill routine, try FreeMotion’s Incline Trainer (\$5,499, freemotionfitness.com for info), with a 30 percent incline (most machines top out at 15 percent). Looking for a class to whip your butt into shape? Take step aerobics with SPRI’s new slanted risers (\$59.95, spri.com), which amp up the step’s angle to 17 percent.

5 “I lift weights, but I’m not getting stronger all over. What will help?”

Smart solution: Three-dimensional training. It sounds techy, but it’s not, we swear. “Moving in a three-dimensional pattern [aka multiplanar training] is much more functional than using fixed-path weight machines—you do it every time you lift a bag or open a door,” Bryant says. “Because you also engage more muscles working out this way, you burn more calories, reducing body fat and improving tone.”

Try: Adding rotations to some of your favorite moves on top of doing regular calorie-blasting cardio, suggests Fred Hoffman, an international fitness consultant and 2007 IDEA Fitness Instructor of the Year. For example, do “clock” lunges (where you move forward, sideways, then back) instead of basic lunges; try a core twist at the top of a squat; toss a ball to someone behind you by twisting your torso; or do chest flyes using an exercise band—but mix it up so your arms move diagonally. Or try a cable-based machine. A recent study showed that people who did exercises using cable machines improved their



strength more than twice as much as those who used traditional machines. “Cables provide a bigger range of motion, so you work more muscle fibers in more directions—front to back, side to side, up and down, and everything in between—to boost your core strength and power,” Hoffman says. Two machines to check out: Precor’s S3.23 Functional

↑ Don’t stand in one place as you tone your upper body—mix it up by lunging from side to side instead.

Trainer (\$2,699, precort.com for info) and FreeMotion’s Dual Cable Cross (\$3,500, freemotionfitness.com for info). They both let you set virtually unlimited angles, whether you’re doing rows, leg lifts or presses. ■