

# Banish stubborn fat

Hey, trouble spots—yes, we're talking to YOU, hips, thighs and tummy—you have been warned!

BY ERIN PHELAN

**EVER GRABBED A CHUNK** of your flesh and lamented, "How do I get rid of *this*?" As a fitness trainer, I can tell you it's one of the questions I get most from women. And invariably it's our soft tummy or hips, wobbly upper arms, thick thighs, widening bum—or all of the above.

Yes, it is possible to get rid of fat if you have the right overall plan—and we've got that workout for you. But first you should know it's not possible to work just one body part and expect to magically transform it. "A thousand leg lifts are not going to get rid of the fat on your thighs, and a ton of crunches won't get rid of your tummy pouch," says Sherri McMillan, a Canadian personal trainer and the owner of Northwest Personal Training in Washington State.

Here's why: "Let's say you are doing those leg lifts," says McMillan. "Your muscles cry out for energy." One main source is your carbohydrate stores, and the other is fat. Fat is mobilized from anywhere in the body, routed through the liver and then to its final destination. "So doing leg lifts doesn't mean you are burning leg fat specifically—in fact, for most women the fat in our legs is very

slow to mobilize, so it will probably be the last fat to be utilized."

Adds Angela Pereira, president of First Line Kinesiologists Inc. in Toronto, do not underestimate the importance of a healthy liver and pancreas in weight loss. "In order to have an increased metabolism to promote weight loss, both the liver and the pancreas have to work properly. This comes from eating a high-fibre diet, and limiting alcohol and simple carbohydrates."

Although different body types gain weight in different areas, it's most noticeable in your midsection. "You build fat up all over the body, but the centre is where your organs are and those areas will collect fat.

And you gain fat not simply where you can see it, but around the organs, too," Pereira says. As for those saggy upper arms many women complain about, says McMillan, "the triceps aren't used as much as the biceps in our day-to-day life, so the muscle atrophies and ends up hanging there with excess skin and fat." What a lovely image.

Finally, though, the good news: You *can* do something about these trouble spots, and the keys are a healthy diet and consistent cardio. For someone who wants to get lean and toned, the role of cardio is critical to mobilize the fat that is overlaying the actual muscle. And it is important to do different activities. Some days you should do a long,



slow cardio workout, such as walking or cycling; other days, go hard and fast with something like a spinning class or interval training. "This is the fastest way to get fit and become efficient at utilizing fat as a fuel," says McMillan. The fat will disappear, and that consistent cardio means you can then target areas to tone specific muscles. "Once you start to work a body part—say, the upper arm—with targeted exercises, you'll be amazed at the results."

With McMillan's help, Best Health designed a program of seven exercises that tone your thighs, butt, triceps and core. Follow the cardio prescription; do these exercises; eat a high-fibre, healthy diet; and you will see results within eight to 10 weeks! (Before starting any new fitness program, speak to your doctor to see if it's safe for you.)

## GET STARTED

### EQUIPMENT

- A kitchen chair
- A mat or towel
- A pair of dumbbells (three to eight pounds)
- A watch or timer that counts seconds (optional)

**WARM-UP** Do light cardio for five minutes: Walk or jog on the spot or walk up and down a set of stairs.

**DO YOUR CARDIO** Since you will be doing our targeted muscle-toning program two to three times a week, on the days in between you should do cardio exercises. (And one day a week, rest.)

"If you really want to lose weight, it's necessary to do 40 to 60 minutes of cardio in your target heart range," says Pereira. Do cardio programs at different intensities. For example, if you work out at the gym, you might walk on the treadmill at 70 per cent of your maximum heart rate; another time you might try a high-intensity dance class. If you're not a gym person, your cardio might be a brisk walk or a run one day; then increase the intensity the next time by walking or running at that same brisk speed, but add some hills.



For three ab-blasting workouts, log on to [besthealthmag.ca/janfeb2011](http://besthealthmag.ca/janfeb2011).

## 7 MOVES THAT TARGET TROUBLE SPOTS

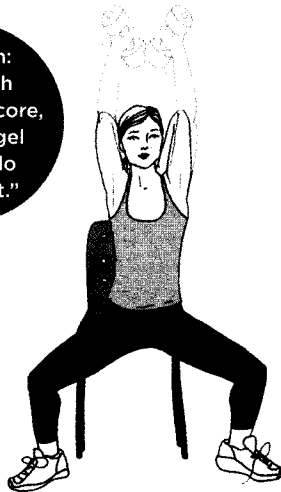
Each exercise targets at least three "trouble spots." From warm-up to cool-down, this workout should take 30 to 45 minutes. For best results, do the workout two to three times a week. Each time, here's what to do:

- Complete one set of 10 repetitions.
- Do one minute of cardio between exercises, such as jogging on the spot, jumping jacks or skipping. For a fun cardio blast, roll up a towel and place it on the floor—hop over the towel with one or both feet for a minute.
- Repeat the circuit depending on your fitness level: Beginners should do the circuit once, and add another circuit after three to four weeks. If you already exercise moderately, do the circuit twice (or more if you can).

Remember to challenge yourself—if the hand weights are too light, go heavier!

### 1. SUMO SKY

McMillan: "To reach your inner core, add a Kegel as you do the squat."



*Works: hips, glutes, thighs, triceps and core*

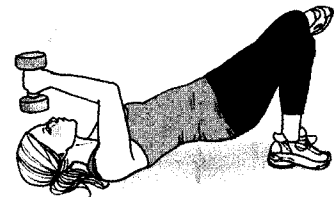
**A.** Stand over a kitchen chair with feet more than shoulder-width apart and toes angled outward. With one dumbbell in each hand, straighten both arms overhead, hands facing each other, upper arms hugging head. (For proper form throughout this move, engage your core by keeping your back neutral and pulling in your belly button.)

**B.** (Shown) Looking straight ahead, drop your tailbone toward the chair, hovering over it in a deep squat (be careful your knees do not go beyond your toes). As you lower yourself, bend your elbows fully behind you.

**C.** Straighten legs, squeezing your glutes and inner thighs as you stand up. Simultaneously straighten your arms overhead, engaging triceps. Do 10 reps.

### 2. BRIDGE TO EVERYWHERE

The idea of having your leg crossed is to work the glutes.



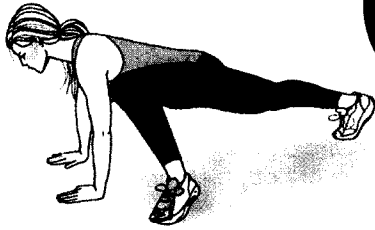
*Works: Glutes, hamstrings, triceps and shoulders*

**A.** Lie on your back on the mat, your feet on the floor with knees bent; cross your right foot over your left knee, pressing right knee wide out. Take a dumbbell in your right hand and extend your arm straight up to ceiling.

**B.** (Shown) Pressing your left foot into the floor, lift your hips and tighten your glutes at the top of the movement—your right leg will act as resistance. As you lift your glutes, slowly lower the dumbbell toward your forehead, bending your arm at the elbow.

**C.** Lower glutes back to the floor, and straighten right arm back toward the ceiling, keeping elbow in line with shoulder. Do 10 reps; switch legs and arms. →

### 3. SPIDER WOMAN

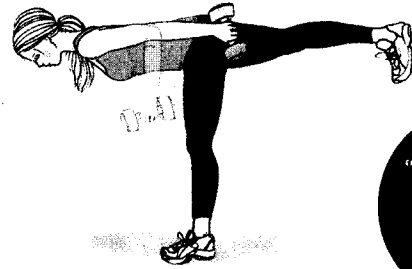


This is a great functional exercise for the whole body, says McMillan.

*Works: Core, chest, triceps and hips*

- A.** Get on hands and knees, and walk your hands out to a push-up position. Straighten your legs so you are now in a plank or push-up stance.
- B.** (Shown) Keeping your glutes down, slowly draw your left knee up the outside of your body, taking it out toward your left elbow—in “spiderwoman” style. Your left foot should hover an inch or two above the floor.
- C.** Lower your left leg back down, bringing feet together; switch sides. Complete 10 repetitions with each leg.

### 4. LUNGE TRI-FLY



McMillan: “You are really going to feel this one, especially in your legs.”

*Works: Glutes, hips, triceps and core*

- A.** Start with your feet together, one dumbbell in each hand, arms at your sides. Lunge your left leg back, dropping your knee so shin is parallel with the floor, and bend elbows to 90 degrees.
- B.** (Shown) Balance on right leg, stand tall and lift left leg behind you in “airplane pose”—the leg is extended in the air straight from the hip; squeeze glute. As you extend left leg, bring bent elbows up, tucked by your side. Straighten your arms behind you into a “triceps kickback.” Pause for a second.
- C.** Bend arms back in, return to standing. Repeat 10 times; switch sides.

### 5. SCISSOR SISTERS

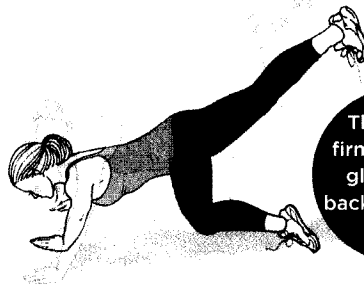


This is such a great way to strengthen your abs.

*Works: Core, obliques, triceps and hips*

- A.** Lie on your back, with one weight in each hand. Raise your knees so that your feet and knees are in the air (reverse tabletop position). Straighten arms to the ceiling.
- B.** (Shown) Extend right leg toward the floor, so it hovers an inch above the floor, while drawing left knee to chest and bringing elbows down to floor, pressed tight to sides.
- C.** Return to starting position. Switch sides. Alternate 10 times.

### 6. TRICEPS TUSH-TUCK

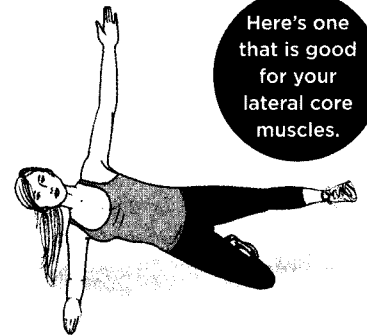


This move firms up your glutes and backs of upper arms.

*Works: Glutes, hamstrings, chest and triceps*

- A.** On your hands and knees, walk hands out slightly in front, arms parallel, shoulder-width apart. Bend your left leg up and behind you at 90 degrees. Press heel up for three pulses.
- B.** (Shown) Straighten leg in line with body, and lower your upper body into a push-up. Bend your heel back toward your glute in a “mule kick.”
- C.** Return to starting position. Do 10 reps. Switch sides.

### 7. SIDE-LIFT-PLANK



Here's one that is good for your lateral core muscles.

*Works: Thighs, hips and obliques*

- A.** Lie on your right side, right knee bent at 90 degrees, left leg extended straight. Pulse left leg up about a foot toward the ceiling for three counts. Repeat 10 times.
- B.** (Shown) As you bring your left leg back down, parallel to floor, lift your hips up toward ceiling (supported by your right elbow and knee) so that you are in a side plank; hold for 30 seconds.
- C.** Return to starting position. Switch sides. □

### COOL-DOWN STRETCH

Take five minutes to get your heart rate down, and run through a series of static stretches. We've got the routine for you: Go to [besthealthmag.ca](http://besthealthmag.ca) and search “6 essential cool-down stretches.”