



diet&fitness

Right on. time

Pushed for time? Try one of these quick-sticks workouts

It's no secret that life today is busier than ever. Between working, running a household and juggling the kids' social schedules, exercise can be pushed further and further down our list of priorities.

The irony is that regular exercise is a mood and energy booster – skip it because you're stressed or exhausted and you'll feel even more tired and lacking in vitality.

The good news is you don't need to spend two hours in the gym to make your exercise count. There's a range of time-efficient workouts available that can help you achieve maximum results in minimum time.

15 MINUTES POWER PLATE

What is it? Developed by Russian scientists for their Olympic athletes in the 1970s and later used to train cosmonauts, the Power Plate is a vibrating platform that claims to improve circulation, increase muscle strength and flexibility and decrease cellulite.

How does it work? Users stand on the platform and hold a sequence of poses, such as lunges and squats, for up to 60 seconds. With each vibration the body is forced

to perform reflexive muscle actions 25 to 50 times per second, which tones and strengthens the muscles.

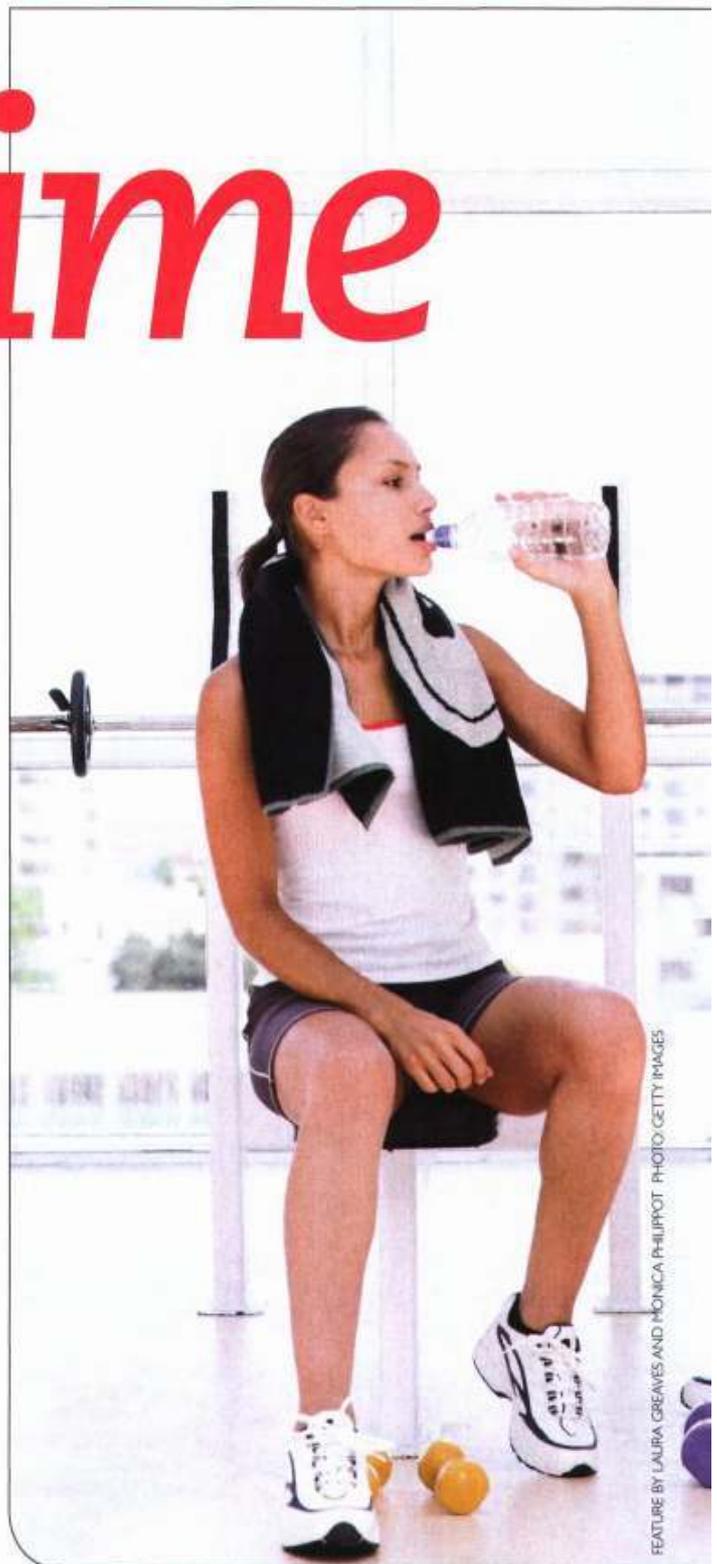
How long does it take?

Workout sessions range from 15 to 30 minutes. With three sessions a week, expect to see results in six weeks.

The best bit? Half an hour on a Power Plate has the same effect on the body as an hour or longer slogging it out in a conventional gym. It's no wonder Elle Macpherson, Claudia Schiffer and Madonna are fans.

Who uses it? The Power Plate is suitable for all ages and fitness levels. Pilates instructor Sonia Darbey says she can't keep up with demand for use of the four Power Plate machines at her Sydney studio. 'You don't have to work hard anymore, you just have to work smart – and there are ways you can do that without jumping up and down and getting hot and sweaty,' she says. 'I think it's the way of the future.'

What does it cost? Prices vary depending on where you go. At Sonia's studio, Pilates Physique, in Sydney's Edgecliff, a Power Plate session costs from \$30. Visit www.pilatesphysique.com.au or call 02 9363 3387 for more information.



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29 MINUTES CONTOURS

What is it? A 29-minute circuit workout that includes eight pieces of cardio equipment, eight weights machines and warm-up and cool-down stretches.

How does it work? Users complete two laps of the circuit and there are trainers on hand to provide advice and motivation and ensure you're getting the most effective workout. While weight loss is common, Contours CEO Dave Hundt says significant centimetre loss is a virtual certainty. 'We tend to focus more on measurements and strength, because when you do resistance exercises you're increasing muscle mass in the body and muscle weighs more than fat,' he says.

How long does it take? Three 29-minute workouts a week should deliver visible results in four to six weeks. Contours also runs regular 12-week challenges, which generate an average overall centimetre loss of 28cm.

The best bit? 'We're not like large gyms who struggle to maintain a customer relationship,' Dave says. 'We have 400-500 members per studio and they're not forgotten about.'

Who uses it? Contours is for ladies only. All ages and fitness levels are welcome.

What does it cost? Membership costs from \$59 per month plus joining fee. There are Contours studios across Australia. Visit www.contours.net.au. **S&H**

TRY THESE AT HOME

● **1-6 minutes**

Nintendo Wii Fit

With 40 activities to choose from, including yoga classes, tennis and push-ups, Nintendo takes video gaming to a whole new level. It all happens in front of your TV on a pressure-sensitive 'balance board', which doubles as a weight, and can even gauge your 'fitness age'. If you want a break from the norm, slalom racing or even tightrope walking are on offer, all with a promise to improve your balance, tone muscles and – best of all – give you tons of giggles while working up a good old sweat.

RRP \$150. See www.nintendo.com.au for more info.

● **7 minutes**

7 Minutes of Magic (book)

Author Lee Holden combines methods from qi gong, yoga, tai chi and Western exercise to give readers speedy sessions for a morning and evening workout designed to energise readers and help them de-stress.

Complete with nutritional advice and additional exercises for weekends, and with easy, step-by-step illustrations, the book promises to transform your energy through the ancient secrets of Eastern magic. Worth a flick, we say.

\$49.95 at www.collinsbooks.com.au

● **10-30 minutes**

Radiance Yoga (DVD)

Roll out your mats for Vinyasa yoga specialist Jessie Chapman's 10-, 15-, 20- and 30-minute class options in two categories, Stretch & Open and Strength & Balance. Filmed on the gorgeous beaches of Byron Bay and great for anyone from beginners to more experienced yogis, the classes are an excellent way to improve your flexibility, balance, inner stillness and core strength.

\$29 each at www.intoyoga.com