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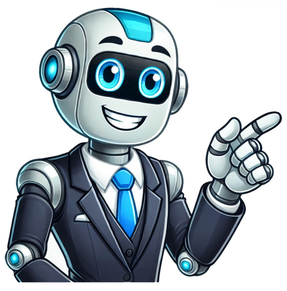

This routine is such that you must be prepared for hard training and you should ensure that your health is of such that you may embark on this type of routine. If you are not sure then seek medical advice before starting. If just starting out then you must cut the routine down until your level of fitness and level of resistance training is of such a level that you can complete all of this routine. If you are a beginner you should only complete 2 sets of the resistance training given below and only complete the first six minutes of the cardio routine and increasing week by week. Making sure that you complete the warm up, stretch, and cool down given below. It is very important that you warm up before training, and after the warm up you should complete some muscle stretching, and cool down after your training routine. Warm Up. The first part of any training routine is the warm-up, it should increase the heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen consumption, dilate the blood vessels, increase elasticity of the active muscles, and increase the heat produced by the muscle groups to be used during exercise. A proper warm-up consists of two phases: A graduated aerobic warm-up activity - This is a warm-up to get the blood flowing to the muscles. This also heats up the working muscles making them less prone to injury. Any aerobic activity done at the very low intensity can serve to warm-up the muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Stretching and flexibility – This is to be performed on the muscle groups you will be exercising during the cardiovascular activity. (An example would be a quadriceps stretch before bicycling). The warm-up phase should last anywhere from 5 – 10 mins. Cool Down The purpose of a cool down is to slowly decrease the cardiovascular work and overall metabolism that were elevated during the cardiovascular activity. A cool down consists of slowing down the intensity level of the cardiovascular activity you are performing slowly. Stopping exercise suddenly can be dangerous. A cool down keeps the body circulating blood and keeps blood from pooling in the veins. A proper cool down should last about 5 – 10 min for each thirty minutes of exercise if the cardiovascular activity is performed for longer periods or is of higher intensity the cool down phase should last longer. Stretching Before Training Stretching before your training routine has positive effects on your posture and mobility, and can also reduce the risk of injury. Here is a list of basic stretching exercises. Upper back stretch. From a standing position, grasp a stationary object (such as a pole or exercise machine) with both hands. Bend the knees and sit back so that your arms are fully extended and supporting your weight. Shift your weight to the right to isolate the right portion of your latissimus muscle (side of back). Hold this position for 20 – 30 seconds, and then shift your weight to the left. Complete 1 – 3 repetitions. Triceps stretch. (back of arm) From a standing position, raise your right arm over your head. Bend your elbow so that your right hand is behind your head. With your left hand grasp your right wrist or elbow and pull it back as far as comfortably possible, pointing your right elbow toward the ceiling. Hold this position for 20 -30 seconds then repeat the process with your left arm. Complete 1 – 3 repetitions with each arm. Chest stretch. From a standing position, grasp a stationary object (such as a piece of exercise equipment or a pole) with your right hand. Your arm should be straight and roughly parallel to the ground. 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The reasons why we must complete this number of repetitions are: Maximum growth can only be achieved by activating the full spectrum of muscle fibres, and a moderate rep scheme will accomplish this better than a low rep range or even a very high rep range. Both of the fast twitch and slow twitch muscle fibres are brought into play, and the time the muscle is under tension is long enough to work the muscles to their fullest potential. Moderate reps have also been shown to maximise the release of various hormones, including testosterone and growth hormone. This is facilitated by the accrual of lactic acid. It has been shown that lactate promotes hormonal excitation, which then acts on the muscle cell to induce growth. Moderate repetition has been shown to cause a distinct “pump” in the muscle in which your muscles fill up with blood. This not only provides a temporary fullness to your muscles, but also increases the hydration within muscle cells. Studies have demonstrated that a hydrated cell stimulates protein synthesis and inhibits protein breakdown (proteolysis). Therefore muscles will be provided with the raw materials to lay down new contractile proteins, which is the primary basis for muscle growth. In relation to the overload principle, the weight you choose must be heavy enough that the last few reps must be a struggle, and you may not be able to complete all the reps, therefore if you are able to complete the full amount of reps quite easily then the weight is to light. If you are not able to complete at least eight reps then the weight is too heavy and must be dropped. It may take you a couple of sessions to get the weights right. Rests between sets will be 60 – 90 seconds between sets, this has been proven to be sufficient so that you can be strong on the next sets whilst keep your anabolic levels high. The workouts given below should not be done on consecutive days but ideally on a Mon, Wed and Friday. 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Over a period these factors allow your body to rely more on utilizing fat rather than glycogen (carbohydrates) for fuel helping you obtain and sustain long term weight management. Cardio training also improves muscular endurance. When you lift weights, your body converts glucose into the high-energy compound ATP to fuel exercise performance. During this conversion process, lactic acid is produced and rapidly accumulates in your muscles as you train. When lactic acid builds up past a certain point, you experience an intense burning sensation in the muscles. The burn becomes so strong that it impedes your ability to achieve a muscular contraction; at that point you simply cannot continue to train. However, by increasing aerobic capacity, your cardiovascular system becomes more efficient at delivering oxygen to the working muscles. This helps to increase your lactic acid threshold, and thereby delays the onset of lactic acid build up. 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This cycle will be repeated multiple times over the course of your cardio workout, and allow you to burn in excess of 300 calories in just 30 mins. You will monitor the intensity of intervals using a rate of perceived exertion (RPE). This is a measure of how hard you feel when you are training, taking into account the physical sensations you experience during your workout, including increases in hear rate, breathing rate, and sweating. The RPE is rated using an incremental scale ranging from one to ten, with one representing a lack of exertion and ten being the maximum possible exertion. For example, a three would indicate a level of exertion that is fairly easy, and a level eight would be a level that was very demanding. You may have trouble getting through an entire workout at the suggested RPE levels; if this is the case then don’t worry simply decrease your levels to a level more consistent with your level of ability. 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Alternatively, you can download the free PDF using the link below: 12 Week Female Workout Plan Free PDF Program styleResistance trainingProgram duration12 weeksTarget GenderFemaleWorkout duration1-2 hoursScheduling5 day splitGoalShape and tone musclesLevelBeginners to advanced Hitting the weights will help women build lean muscle mass, which can boost their metabolism and help them burn fat more efficiently. This means they’ll be able to shed those unwanted pounds and achieve a lean, toned physique that will turn heads at the beach or on the dance floor. Regular exercise can help women lower their risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, as well as improve their bone density and reduce their risk of osteoporosis. They will feel more energized throughout the day. Exercise also promotes blood flow and oxygen delivery to the body which can help women feel more alert and focused. This can be especially beneficial for women who lead busy lives and need to be productive throughout the day. Toned arms, a tight butt, and a flat stomach are all things that most women strive for, and hitting the gym regularly can help them achieve those goals. Plus, a toned body can help women feel more confident and attractive, which can have a positive impact on their personal and professional lives. Exercise can help women improve their sleep quality. By reducing stress and anxiety, exercise can help women fall asleep more easily and stay asleep longer. Additionally, exercise can help regulate the body’s circadian rhythms, which can further improve sleep quality. First off, you can expect to tone up and add appealing shape to your muscles. Each lady is going to be starting from a different spot. Some will be closer to their goal…maybe that’s you. And some will have a little more work to do in the gym and the kitchen. And body types differ. There’s no workout plan on the planet that can take a woman with a long waist and shorter legs into a long-legged lass with an X-shaped upper body profile who could body double as Wonder Woman. Any program that claims to be able to is, well, just a lie. You will not get jacked like a dude. For some mysterious reason known only to Gandalf and the Lord God Almighty, the mythology of weight training turning any female body into Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson seems to live on, kinda like that mildew you can’t ever quite kill in the corner of your bathtub. It’s just stupid, and it’s impossible. Women’s bodies do not produce enough of the hormone necessary to build a ballsy jacked physique. The one and only way a woman can get jacked like a guy is if she injects or ingests male or growth hormone. And yes, ladies, there are some really big muscular gals out there who swear they don’t, but I’m afraid to tell you they’re liars. Are there some extreme genetic outliers who might be the exception to the rule? Probably, but you don’t know them. Doesn’t matter. You can achieve the body you want with a little skill, hard work, and a good program (see attached). If you’ve seen a woman and thought to yourself, “wow, I’d like a bod that looks like hers”–especially glutes these days–chances are that she gets after it in the weight room, and probably spends very little to zero time on the treadmill or exercise bike…and probably not in the group fitness class either, bouncing around like she had a quintuple espresso an hour before. The enviable female shape today is one whose owner grinds it out on the iron and steel alongside the dudes. Actually, more dudes need to train like the gals. Yes. BUT … … only if you adjust what you eat to match your goals. A mentor of mine said, “You can’t out-train a bad diet”. You do need to eat enough to fuel yourself for the workouts enclosed. Here are a few directional statements you can use to guide what you eat without getting too complicated. “If it was once a plant, or ate a plant, eat it. If it was made in a plant, don’t.” – Scott Abel Fish don’t eat plants; fish is a great source of protein and healthy fats. “Eat [real] food, not too much, mostly plants.” – “Food Rules: An Eater’s Manual” by Michael Pollan Get four full helpings of colorful fruits or vegetables daily. Garnishes are not servings. Brown is not a color. Eat off a smaller plate. (There’s evidence that suggests that larger plate size psychologically encourages larger portions or feelings of being underserved.) When grocery shopping, look for fewer ingredients, the fewer ingredients listed the better. Processed foods contain many ingredients, some with chemical names you can’t pronounce. Foods without labels are even better. Limit (or even eliminate) foods made from pulverized ingredients. This means flour-based products like bread, tortillas, chips, pasta, baked goods. Related: Try our 7-Day Keto Diet Plan Here’s the basic structure for the Female Workout Plan: DaySplit1Legs, Arms2Shoulders3Rest4Back, Glutes, Calves5Chest6Cardio, Abs7Rest Leg, Back and Glute day will likely be the most strenuous, so I’ve strategically placed them so your leg and posterior chain muscles have a chance to recover before you turn around and work them again. Pay special attention to muscle fatigue and soreness. If you need to back off on one day, back off the cardio for a shorter duration, or do one fewer sets. You can also regress your cardio by opting for the treadmill instead of the stairclimber, or setting the treadmill to a lesser angle. Long walks, while not mentioned in the program, is a terrific way to get LISS (Low Intensity Steady State) cardio. A long walk would be something on the order of 5000 to 10,000 steps at a single stretch. (5000 steps over the course of a day doesn’t really count.) Knowing “when to say when” takes a lot of experience, as in years. In general, you’re better off under-training a bit than over-training. Just make sure you’re not fooling yourself into doing too little–or too much. Get ready for the toughest workout of the week. Leg-Arm Day drills down on glutes and legs, and tosses in the arm work since it’s overall less taxing. Leg Day hits the quads and hamstrings with a healthy dose of glutes. But stay tuned for Day 4 when we torch the glute muscles. Hit this day hard. You’ll appreciate the results. Want to rock the strappy (or strapless) dress, or kill that tight top? Yeah, you know who you are. This is your day. Get this day right and you’ll see what I mean. Peach day! Glute development is the cornerstone of this 12-week ladies’ routine. Dial up the intensity to get the results you want. After you finish smoking your booty muscles, you’ll move on to your back. Your back will have already warmed it up with one of the glute exercises, the RDLs. Some old favorite upper back exercises are included here for strength and shape and add to a balanced upper body look, including that muscular seam that runs top to bottom along your spine. Quick note here about calf raises. Use a long pause in the bottom part of each rep when the calf is stretched. Try a five to 10 second pause. There’s interesting research performed on the calf muscle specifically that suggests that prolonged stretch can build muscle thickness. The study did not look into a long stretch during sets of calf raises. However, taken directionally, a longer loaded stretch at the bottom of each rep hypothetically should produce more muscle growth. Regardless, calf raises should be performed slowly and under control. Bouncing up and down is both pointless and ridiculous. Chest Day is short and to-the-point. These exercises work the fan-shaped pectoralis major from top to bottom, adding tone along your collar bones and mid-chest. There are only three exercises with a total of 15 sets including the warm-up and prep sets, but if you do these right, they will more than get the job done. Round out your week with some low impact cardio and mid-section work. Cardio-Ab day focuses on some general fitness while getting you some of the cosmetic benefits you’re looking for. Specifically, we’ll hit the glutes and calves again with the stairclimber or the treadmill set at a steeper incline, and focus in on the visible muscles of the core. Leg Raises are absent because leg raises *do not* work the abs dynamically. Yeah, sure; there’s some isometric contraction of the abdominals, but that’s because the abs have to work to stabilize the lumbar spine while your legs do the actual work. (I always have to explain this.) Yes, you will “feel” leg raises in your gut. There’s a good reason and here it is. The muscles that raise the legs lie deep in the abdomen, behind the internal organs. Those deep muscles in your middle will fatigue and develop a lactic acid burn just like any muscle in the body. The muscles you’ll work in this program and the ones you can see with your top off or when your mid-section is exposed (bikinis, midriff tops, etc). Take it easy on Day 7 and rest up for another week of hard, productive toning and shaping. In summary, this program works on all the major skeletal muscle groups but focuses on the ones that ladies tend to care about most these days: Glutes Legs Shoulders, especially from the back, Upper arms Rest days are strategically inserted to allow for the recovery needed to see the benefits of the hard work. LEGS / ARMSWarm upSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Air squats30-50   Heel-elevated DB squats (Goblet or at side)2012-1510-1210-128-10Leg Extensions 2012-1510-1210-12 8-10 Romanian Deadlift (RDL) (Hex bar or DB) 2010-1210-1210-128-10Leg Curls2010-1210-1210-128-10 Cable Triceps Extensions2015-2012-1510-128-10Biceps Curls, single arm2015-2012-1510-128-10 Hammer Curls 2015-2012-1510-128-10 SHOULDERSWarm upSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Side Lateral Raises(Cable or DB)2015-2012-1512-1510-12Thumbs-Up Front Raises(Cable or DB)15-2012-1512-1510-12Rear Delt Cable or Seated Reverse DB Flyes15-2012-1512-1510-12High incline DB or Smith Machine Presses2015-2012-1512-1510-12Shrugs(Cable or DB)2015-2012-1512-1510-12Scapula “Kelso” Shrugs2015-2012-1510-1210-12DB “Y” Raises, Plate Raises, or Lu Raises2015-2012-1510-1210-12 GLUTES / BACK / CALVESWarm upSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Bulgarian Split Squats2015-2012-1510-1210-12Romanian Deadlift (RDL)20 15-2012-1510-1210-12Contra-lateral B-Stance DB RDLs2015-2012-1510-12 10-12Cable Glute Hip Abductions(single leg)2015-2012-1510-12 10-12Lat Pull-Ins or Pull-downs2015-2012-1510-1210-12Chest Supported Machine Row15-2012-1510-1210-12Motorcycle Rows15-2012-1510-1210-12Single-Leg Calf Raises20-2520-2520-2520-25Toe raises20-2520-25 CHESTWarm upSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Machine Chest Press20-2515-2012-1510-1210-12Single or Two-arm High-to-Low Cable Fly20-2515-2012-1510-1210-12Single or Two-arm Low-to-High Cable Fly20-2515-2012-1510-1210-12 CARDIO / ABSWarm upSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Stairclimber or Treadmill on incline. (Can sub sprints)30 minsCrunches20202020Sit Ups with a Twist2020Side Bends15-20 per side15-20 per side This is maybe the most important section in this entire article ladies! If you get nothing else out of this, hold onto this. Learn the exercises and nag your own self pitilessly about your form. Be your own personal drill sergeant. You can take the best exercise in the world, do it wrong–even just a teeny bit wrong–and jack it up beyond all repair. It helps to see people who do the exercises correctly. There are some excellent online tutors on exercise form. All the exercises in the workout plan attached have been demonstrated by one or more of these people: Joe Bennett, Tom Purvis, Ryan Humiston, Paul Carter, Alexander Cortes, Scott Abel. There are others out there and I’m sure some of them are good. These are the guys I’ve seen do it best. Warm up before your workout to prevent injury and practice the movements. Warm-ups are important for anyone and even more crucial for older adults. If you’re a newcomer to the gym but a veteran in another sport, you’ll already understand the value of a good warm-up. The warm-ups included in this workout program are composed of very light sets of the movements you’ll be doing during the workout, an application of the SAID Principle (Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands). You should also get in the habit of stretching the target muscles before actually targeting them. This program will target basically every single muscle you have in your body, so getting those muscle loose is crucial. There’s nothing worse than getting started on a heavy set of bench press and pulling a pectoral muscle, which could have easily been prevented with some simple chest stretches. Progressive overload is simple. You move up as you get better. Once you’re able to do the specified number of reps with the weight you’ve selected for an exercise, you increase either the load or the number of reps. Simple. Nail the reps, increase the weight. Rep ranges should remain as-specified. Pick a weight you can do for the number of reps listed and not a single rep more. Here’s an example using a cable machine set at 15kg: The program says to do 10 to 12 reps. Week 1, you’re able to do 10 good reps using 15kg. By Week 3, you’re able to do 13 reps with good form and could probably do the 14th. Raise the weight so that you’re back to only being able to do 10 reps with good form. Progressive overload is a well-established method for shaping and toning muscle, supported by reams of clinical data. Your muscles will benefit most from the most challenging reps, when your brain is recruiting more muscle fibers for the task at hand i.e., lifting the weight. Clinical evidence supports that the most-challenging reps – as gauged by the loss of velocity (distance/speed) – are the ones that produce the greatest muscular fatigue. So, if you connect the dots and agree that muscular fatigue leads to muscular adaptations (meaning strength and size), you can reasonably conclude, as Mike Mentzer did years ago, that intensity does indeed result in density. Now, it’s important to distinguish between intentionally slow reps (as proposed by some) where the weight is lifted at a predetermined speed. Some call that “tempo training”. Tempo training is not what we mean when we mention reduced velocity. In our application, reduced velocity is the result of the muscles being unable to push a weight any faster. You can push like crazy and the weight won’t move fast. A 2021 study examined assumptions on how many reps a set should have depending on its objectives. In other words, it challenged the notion that low-rep high-load sets led to strength, and low-load high-rep sets produce endurance. In fact it found that muscular adaptations are possible with a wide range of rep continuums. Taken together, studies on rep continuum and adaptive muscular fatigue lead to a logical conclusion that the number of reps isn’t as important as how hard they are toward the end of each set. Interestingly, the study mentions that women may have a greater resistance to [muscular] fatigue and that the ladies may be able to use a wider array of rep ranges than the guys. This very workout plan takes that into account. All of the above assumes good form. Bottom line: that tone and shape you want means you’re gonna be moving stuff that feels heavy. If you’re flying through a set and feel like you could do six or seven more reps, raise that weight. Recovery is as important to physique development as your actual lifting is. It is the period when your muscles grow in response to the stimulus. Ratio imbalances between stimulus (training) and recovery leads to overtraining and chronic overuse injuries. Rest days should allow for your muscles to bounce back from your hard work. Rest days should be days spent completely away from the gym, and not working out at home either. Doesn’t mean you should lie in bed all day; activities of daily living are encouraged. Your central nervous system (CNS) receives overload during intense training along with your muscles. It’s just as important to let the CNS recover also, since the CNS is what powers your muscles. This is clinically documented. How long should you wait before doing your next set, or your next exercise? Research and latest thought among the true experts (not merely influencers) suggests that longer rest periods between sets is best. Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) is one way to determine it. To apply RPE, gauge your readiness for the next set by asking yourself, “can I do this next set with equal or greater intensity than the one I just completed?” If you are a clock-watcher, 3 minutes between intense sets is a good rule of thumb. How many more reps could you actually do with good form at the end of a set? That is RIR, Reps In Reserve. Honestly ask yourself, how many more reps could I actually do with good form? Don’t underestimate or overestimate yourself. Follow these guidelines: Until you master each exercise’s form allow a 1 to 2 RIR. Never sacrifice form. Raise your RIR if you’re having a bad day in the gym. Decrease RIR if you’re having a great day and the weights feel like the Earth’s gravitational field took a day off. See above notes about Intensity. Download our 12 Week Female Workout Plan PDF using the link below. 12 Week Female Workout Plan PDF If your goal is to lose weight and tone up, you'll need to do both cardio and strength training at the gym. Image Credit: LuckyBusiness/iStock/GettyImages First things first: Toning up and losing weight aren't quite the same. Weight loss is more straightforward as it simply involves lowering your body weight, which can be done by dieting alone. Toning, however, is a different, more complex matter. Although toning is the common term, what you're really looking for is a leaner, stronger-looking physique, which involves losing fat, rather than just overall weight loss. Whether you're looking to lose weight or tone up, here's exactly how to design a gym routine and diet plan to help you reach your goals. Before long, you'll start to lean out and see the toned physique you're after. How to Create a Workout Plan and Stick to a Schedule Just like your diet, your gym schedule needs to be sustainable and realistic. Start by deciding how many days you can get to the gym each week. Ideally, you'll be able to exercise between three and six days per week. These workouts should include both strength and cardio. Strength training is your best tool when it comes to burning fat and sculpting muscle. Increasing your total muscle mass can help you maintain a healthy body weight, according to the American Council on Exercise (ACE). Plan to strength train each muscle group at least two times per week for the best results. Total-body exercises, in which you work every major muscle group in one session, are the most efficient way to accomplish your strength training goals. Select several compound exercises, like deadlifts, squat thrusts or renegade rows, for each workout to ensure you're hitting all the muscle groups, the ACE recommends. In order to build muscle, you'll need to bake in adequate recovery between your strength sessions, too. It's best to avoid training the same muscle group on back-to-back days and allow your muscles to recover for 24 to 72 hours before your next workout, according to the ACE. If you lift the same muscle group every day, you risk muscle overuse, which can increase your risk for injury. During recovery days, you can incorporate some low-impact activities, like easy walking or yoga. Increase Calorie Burn With Cardio If you want to burn more calories, cardio is necessary. You want to get at least 150 minutes of steady-state cardio, like walking, running and cycling, or about 75 minutes of vigorous activity, such as high-intensity interval training (HIIT), each week, according to the physical activity guidelines for Americans. Doing two HIIT days per week or several long walks can get the job done. A Sample Weekly Workout Routine Monday: Full-body strength training workout Tuesday: Rest or active recovery Wednesday: 45-minute HIIT workout Thursday: Rest or active recovery Friday: Full-body strength training workout Saturday: Rest Sunday: 45-minute HIIT workout Best Strength Exercises for Building and Toning Muscles Incorporating both compound and isolation exercises into your routine will help you build total-body strength and tone up. Image Credit: Peathegee Inc/Tetra images/GettyImages As mentioned above, compound exercises are one of the simplest ways to start your strength training regimen. Because they incorporate multiple muscle groups and joints, these moves will burn more calories, improve your coordination, boost your heart rate and improve flexibility, according to the ACE. But you can also create a workout that incorporates both compound movements and upper-body/lower-body isolation exercises. Isolation exercises help you build bigger muscles because they recruit all muscle fibers — slow-twitch and fast-twitch muscle fibers — which leads to greater muscle damage and growth. Remember, the goal is to train all your muscles if you're only going to be strength training about two days per week. As you build your program, consider this sample workout, courtesy of Carolina Araujo, a certified personal trainer. Full-Body Strength Workout Dynamic warm-up routine Squat press: 8 to 10 reps x 4 sets Push-ups: 8 to 10 reps x 4 sets Deadlifts: 8 reps x 4 sets Up and down plank: 10 reps x 4 sets Hip thrust: 10 reps x 4 sets Arnold press: 12 reps x 4 sets Chest press: 10 reps x 4 sets Bent-over row: 10 reps x 4 sets Best Cardio Exercises for Weight Loss The great thing about interval cardio for weight loss is that you can do it on any machine or even outdoors. Image Credit: YakobchukOlena/iStock/GettyImages Although cardio won't help change your body composition (your body's ratio of muscle and fat), it can help increase your overall calorie burn. Plus, cardio exercise is important for your overall heart health. Walking, jogging or steady biking for about 150 minutes per week, or 30 minutes for five days a week, is enough to fulfill your weekly cardio quota, per the physical activity recommendations. But if calorie burn and strength gain are the goal of your cardio sessions, HIIT training is probably the best way to go. This type of exercise involves alternating between intervals of intense movement and brief periods of rest. Many popular HIIT exercises are also strength-based, like burpees and jump squats. So, you'll be able to burn calories while preserving muscle (a win-win). Eating Smart for Fat Loss Your diet plays an important role in losing weight and body fat. Image Credit: wmaster890/iStock/GettyImages No matter how much you exercise, you can't totally neglect your diet either. To lose weight, you'll need to create a calorie deficit, which is when you burn more calories than you consume, according to the Mayo Clinic. You may feel tempted to follow a strict diet for faster results, but most health professionals suggest sticking to a slower weight-loss rate — no more than 1/2 to 2 pounds a week — according to Johns Hopkins Medicine. Losing weight slowly will also help ensure you keep as much muscle mass as possible. To create a sustainable calorie deficit, first track how many calories you're eating each day to maintain your current weight, aka your maintenance calories. You can do this by tracking your food and weight across several weeks, using a food diary or app. Once you've figured out your maintenance calories, you can gradually limit your calorie intake to create a deficit. You can safely cut about 500 calories per day to lose about one pound each week, explains the Mayo Clinic. Replacing some of the processed foods in your diet is the easiest way to get in a deficit. Chips, sweetened beverages and sweets are high in calories but low in nutrients, leaving you hungry and craving more. Instead, focus on eating nutrient-dense foods, as they will help fuel your workouts and keep your muscles strong and lean. Fill your plate with plenty of veggies, whole grains, healthy fats and lean protein, such as chicken, fish, grass-fed beef, eggs, dairy and beans and legumes.