

Work-outs that won't break the bank

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Soup or food cans made dandy weights, if traditional ones are not available. One trainer suggests: Weigh the can on a household scale to determine its actual weight.

Comments Looking at a household budget and I think: Should I join the gym, which costs up to \$50 per month, or not?

Local gyms, including the Scott County Family Y, regularly run sign-up

specials. But some people may not find the time to actually go to a gym on a daily basis.

Here's one other idea: **A New York City-based trainer — Franci Cohen —** has come up with a number of regular household items that work as weights. Printed below is an explanation of a low-cost program, from a publicity firm that works with Cohen:

Achieving a toned, fit body does not have to break the bank. Yoga and pilates classes in addition to gym memberships are not financially realistic for all people.

For parents, going to the gym means having to worry about childcare, therefore adding another expense. Just because you don't have a fat wallet does not mean you can't get buff. The following are budget-friendly at-home fitness tips from Franci Cohen, a fitness trainer and exercise physiologist (francicohen.com).

- Use soup cans for weights.

"You can do any triceps or biceps exercise at home using cans of soup that you'd do at the gym with dumbbells," Cohen said. "To properly gauge the weight, don't go by the ounces listed on the can — that's liquid weight. Instead, weigh the cans on a household scale to figure out the poundage that's best for you."

- Use jugs as weights.

Fill a household bucket or jug with water (or sand, rock salt, or powdered detergent) and secure the top with duct tape. Lift it up and down in front of you as you do squats.

- Substitute paper plates for body sculpting equipment.

"The key here," Cohen said, "is to use the plates to help your body slide on a carpet. This allows you to do body sculpting moves that would ordinarily require workout equipment. You can do the sliding lunge (put the paper plate under one foot and lunge forward). Try simulating skating to work your butt and thighs — just attach the plates to your feet with rubber bands and slide away. Or, get down on all fours, put the plates under your hands, and use them to work your chest by sliding your arms back and forth."

- Substitute a counter top for a push-up bench.

In most homes, at least one counter top, either in the kitchen or the bath, is the right height for a push-up. Put both hands on the counter top, extend your legs behind you at an angle, lean down into the counter, and then push back up.

- Substitute pantyhose for resistance bands.

"Almost any exercise you can do with a resistance band, you can do with old pantyhose or tights," Cohen said. For example, sitting on the floor with your legs straight, loop a pair of pantyhose around the balls of your feet and pull back with both hands as if you are using a rowing machine.

- A fitness ball.

Sometimes called a stability ball, it looks like a large beach ball. You can do many core exercises, including abdominal crunches, with a fitness ball. You can also use a fitness ball to improve your flexibility and balance.

- Kettlebell.

A kettlebell is a round weight with the handle attached at the top. A kettlebell can be used to do strength-training exercises and to help improve grip strength. Kettlebells are available in many sizes.

- Jump-ropes.

Skipping rope can be a great cardiovascular workout. (Editor's note: The jump ropes are inexpensive; mine was \$5 or less.)

- Resistance tubing.

These stretchy tubes offer weight-like resistance when you pull on them. Use the tubes to build strength in your arms and other muscles. Choose from varying degrees of resistance, depending on your fitness level.

- Chair or step stool.

Use a chair for support when doing exercises such as leg curls. A low, sturdy step stool can become exercise equipment if you use it for step training — an aerobic exercise resembling stair climbing.

- Smart Phone

Take a break between gym memberships, weight loss clubs and those hefty trainer fees and swipe your way fit with a variety of low-cost smart phone applications.

"I recommend MyFitnessPal.com a free application on the iPhone," Cohen said. The key here is to know your basal metabolic rate for maintaining your weight and for losing weight and this app does it all, she added. With this app you get free access to the world's largest nutrition and calorie database — over 5 million foods!

- Towels

Make your waist whittling planks more effective with towels, the trainer said. Take two and place them under your hands or feet, then move forward, backwards and sideways.

- Clean sweep This one's easy: You can burn 80 calories every 20 minutes of sweeping. Pull out the broom and get to sweeping every corner of your house or apartment. How's that for multitasking?
- Laundry twist

"Sit next to a full basket of laundry and twist to grab an item from the basket. Twist to the other side to lay it on a pile. Continue until your laundry is finished," Cohen said.