

MONEY MATTERS: DIY FITNESS TIPS!

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Achieving a toned, fit body does not have to break the bank. Yoga and pilates classes in addition to gym memberships are just plain expensive. 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 **New York celebrity fitness trainer and exercise physiologist, Franci Cohen.**

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 says. Adding, "To properly gauge the weight, don't go by the ounces listed on the can — that's liquid weight. Instead, weigh the cans on your 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 is to use the plates to help your body slide on a carpet," says Cohen. "You can do the *sliding lunge* (put the paper plate under one foot and lunge forward) or try simulating *skating* to work your butt and thighs — just attach the plates to your feet with rubber bands and slide away." For a chest workout, place plates under hands and slide 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. Place both hands on the counter top, extend legs at a 45 degree angle, lean into the counter, and 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," says Cohen. 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.

Invest in a fitness ball. Sometimes called a *stability ball*, a fitness ball really looks like a large beach ball. You can do many core exercises, including abdominal crunches, and improve both flexibility and balance

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

Use a chair or step stool for stairs. 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.

Your Smart Phone is smarter than you think. 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 (the key here is to know your basal metabolic rate for maintaining your weight and for losing weight and this app does it all),” recommends Cohen. With this app you get free access to the world’s largest nutrition and calorie database — over 5 million foods!

Make a 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?