

Budget-Friendly Fitness Tips

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Fitness classes and gym memberships can be costly and aren't financially realistic for a lot of people. But you don't have to break the bank to get a toned, fit body. Here are some budget-friendly at-home fitness tips from **Franci Cohen, a New York City fitness trainer and exercise physiologist.** (Editor's note: As always, check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.)

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. "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."

Substitute a countertop for a push-up bench. In most homes, at least one countertop, either in the kitchen or the bath, is the right height for a standing push-up. Put both hands on the countertop, 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 says. 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.

Use a chair for support when doing exercises such as leg curls. Be sure to check that the stool is on a firm, even footing before you begin.

Use low-cost smart phone applications. "I recommend MyFitnessPal.com, a free application on the iPhone," Cohen says. With this app you get free access to the world's largest nutrition and calorie database.

Use a broom 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?

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

Franci Cohen is a personal trainer, exercise physiologist, and certified nutritionist with more than 18 years' experience in the fitness and nutrition industries. For more information, visit www.francicohen.com.