



BEAUTY mommy

back to pretty. fast

Fitness Week! Momspiration from Franci Cohen

Beautymommy.com



When I first read about **New York City mom Franci Cohen**, I was a little intimidated. She's gorgeous, and fit, and she has 4 kids. So I had one of those "how does she do it?" conversations with Kevin, ending it with: "And she has 4 kids." His response? "Maybe you should have 2 more." Funny. I decided to try Franci's advice instead. Franci is a personal trainer, certified nutritionist, exercise physiologist and creator of **SPIDERBANDS®**, a total-body cardio resistance workout that leverages gravity and your bodyweight with other intense exercise modules such as rebounding, kickboxing and indoor cycling. Franci can often be found at Fuel Fitness, a specialty fitness center in Brooklyn.

Franci's advice? Start slowly, and don't try to change everything at once. "We all have our fitness wake-up call at some point in our lives and it can be a powerful catalyst for change," she says. "Unfortunately, many people overcompensate and try to change everything at once, which is a disaster. Making lasting change involves going through stages that aren't necessarily linear. People fluctuate and transition between the stages. Knowing how to move through them can get you where you want to be." So baby steps. I need to start small, especially after the workout/water/veggie soup detox week debacle, which lasted 3 hours. Carb addiction is real, people.

Franci makes exercise sound manageable and even, ahem, enjoyable. Read on for her take on the 3 exercises every woman should be doing, and yummy meal ideas that won't bloat your belly.



What advice can you offer a mom who is just starting a workout routine after months or years of not working out?

The best way to start exercising, after years of no exercise, is to focus on 2 things: cardio respiratory endurance and muscle strength. This will serve as your foundation, off which you can grow and develop stronger muscles and a fitter body overall. Start by walking briskly either outdoors or on a treadmill 4-5 days a week for 40-45 minutes, followed by 10-15 minutes of toning with light (2-4 pound) weights. As you build up, progress from walking, to jogging, and then eventually running. Just be gradual. Your heart and lungs will develop best with small incremental pushes. For example, brisk walking, then brisk walking with a few intervals of jogging, then

straight jogging. With the weights, you can choose the progression: either heavier weights or higher reps over time, depending on your individual goals.



What types of exercise do you recommend to the absolute beginner? And what is the minimum amount you need to do to see results.

Walking is something that doesn't need to be taught, and that most people can easily do. Because brisk walking, your starting point, is not highly aerobic, longer durations (45minutes-1hour) are needed to induce a greater caloric deficit, and for you to see results.

Franci's Flat Belly Meals (for all occasions)

Girl's Night Out

Don't be afraid to have a large meal beforehand (large meaning more than just a PB&J). If you are planning for an active night, whether dancing, bowling or party hopping, you will need the fuel. **Franci** has created the perfect meal for this situation:

- 1 grilled chicken breast (approx 4 oz)
- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice and lentils
- 1 cup steamed string beans

This combo will fill you up without weighing you down, and will give you the energy you need to dance the night away!

Dinner Date

You're wearing a stunning new BCBG dress that already had to be zipped up by your roommate. When you're at the restaurant with your guy refrain from ordering a salad to make it *look* like you're being healthy. All the veggies in the salad will actually cause your stomach to bloat more. **Franci** advises that a fish dish with one side of grilled veggies is the way to go! "Wild Salmon is jam-packed with heart healthy vitamins and omega 3 fatty acids. If Salmon is not an option, mackerel, sea bass and lemon sole are all good options as well. As for the veggies, try to steer clear of cruciferous veggies (such as cauliflower, broccoli) that can cause bloating. Instead opt for grilled zucchini, asparagus, or carrots – which will keep your tummy tamed!"

Beach Day

It's finally getting warm out and you can take that bathing suit out of hiding. If you're going to the beach you need a healthy, energizing meal to get you through the morning but you don't want it to show in your stomach. You're probably thinking that the easiest thing to eat before you head out is some Special K with skim milk. It's low in calories after all, right? It doesn't matter how low-cal it is, the dairy and multi-grains will expand in your intestines, causing your gut to stick out. Instead of cereal, Franci has an awesome recipe for oatmeal pancakes. Take 1/2 cup raw oats, 3 egg whites, 1/2 apple, and a dash of cinnamon and throw in a blender to create the pancake mix. This high fiber non-fat breakfast choice offers whole grain fiber plus additional fiber from the apple, and protein from the egg whites. It's a great filling way to start the day, and will not create any abdominal gas or bloating, so you can go bikini-bare with ease!

Lunch

Eating a well-balanced lunch is essential for boosting energy and productivity; giving you power over that mid-day slump and keeping your metabolism active. A lot of times people want to skip lunch in hopes of losing weight and grab an energy drink to keep them going. This is so bad! The carbonation from an energy drink will make you more bloated than a light lunch. Franci says, "For a mid-day luncheon, your best bet is a salad chock-full of fresh veggies and greens, and topped with a piece of grilled fish, low-fat tuna salad, or fresh turkey breast slices. Throw a few walnuts or almonds on top and dress with a low fat/low sugar dressing, to finish off your delicious salad creation!"

Travel Day

These days airports are getting bigger and so are the food courts. It's tempting to give in to the convenience of fast travel food, but the combination of a high-sodium smorgasbord and air travel equals a *very* bloated body from head to toe. You absolutely must resist because there are better options. Eat before you leave for the airport. Franci suggests packing your carry-on with fruits, veggies, and granola bars. Believe it or not these are available at kiosks. Also, avoid the beverage service on board. Stick to water, you will have a happier flight and feel revived upon arriving at your destination!

I love your flat belly eating tips! Are there any other strategies you use for a flat stomach?

My tried and true top tips for a flatter belly are the following:

- Eat small frequent meals in order to maintain the integrity of the muscles that surround the stomach, and prevent them from being stretched out as they would if you gorged on a huge Thanksgiving dinner. Small frequent meals also keep blood sugar levels stable, thereby preventing hunger pangs and keeping you satiated and happy throughout the day. Also, the more times a day your body is forced to undergo digestion, the more calories burned. So better to eat 7 small meals a day as opposed to 3 large ones.
- When doing ab exercises, stick to those that incorporate all 3 ab muscles (rectus, transverse, and obliques) in order to narrow out your waistline, increase the muscle tone in your abs, and burn the overlying fat.



What specific products/supplements/shakes do you use? Brands of workout wear?

I personally do not use any supplements or shakes. For me, fresh is best! I have my fruit and veggies as is, which I believe is best. Why drink the fruit and veggie juice to gain the vitamins and sugars, when I could burn calories by actually chewing the food, and gain many benefits from digesting the high fiber content as well? I take a daily multivitamin, but no supplements. As for workout gear Nike and Lululemon are two of my faves, but there are so many new lines emerging everyday, that my love extends to so many so far, and my closet has become a melting pot of fitness fashion!



Name 3 exercises that every woman should do.

Kickboxing, rebounding, and SPIDERBANDS® of course! All 3 are core-based, and your core is the foundation of all movements and function. The stronger your core is, the stronger you are. Rebounding has the added bonus of draining fat through the lymphatic system as you counteract the g-force (that propels you upward) and bounce downward. These 3 workouts done properly will yield lasting and fast results!

How do you deal with sagging skin, tummy bulge and other post-baby body concerns?

Unfortunately, there isn't many non-surgical ways to address stretched out and sagging skin, but ridding yourself of the underlying fat can reduce the appearance of the stretched out skin, making your overall appearance more pleasing. Of course extremely obese individuals will find the opposite to be true. As they lose large amounts of weight, they will inevitably be left with unsightly stretched out skin, that often has to be removed surgically.

How do you fit exercise into your busy life?

For me, it's a way of life. And aside from my family, it's one of the best parts of my day everyday. I don't consider my teaching time to be my exercise time, as I am too busy pushing and cheering my clients into doing their best, so they leave class feeling like true warriors and real champs! I keep some exercise equipment at my home, and give myself a fun workout every time opportunity presents itself. The other day I was baking fresh bread for my daughter's class party in school, and jumped on my mini trampoline while I waited for the bread to rise. This morning after 3 hours of teaching at Fuel Fitness, I had a 45 minute break before a business meeting, so I hooked myself up to some SPIDERBANDS® and had a blast! When you love something this much, you just find the time and make it work!

I hope you're as inspired as I am to make a few changes this week! I love how Franci demystifies belly bloat (I always thought it was something that just happened), and her flat belly meal ideas sound simple and delicious! Can't wait to try those oatmeal pancakes!

(All tips courtesy of Franci Cohen, Personal trainer, Certified Nutritionist & Exercise Physiologist; francicohen.com).