[IMAGE]

The 20-Minute Workout

An At-Home 10-Week Conditioning and Fat-Loss Program

By Dr. Jeffrey Tucker

The modern gym is the ideal place to develop strength and lose fat. The only problem with going to the gym is finding time to go to the gym! So, what do you do when you have the time for (or access to) a gym and are limited to your home - complete with screaming kids, countless daily responsibilities and other distractions - for workouts? Turn to the 20-minute at-home workout, of course. Believe it or not, you can lose fat and build muscle safely in just 20 minutes.

Whether you are exercising to get in shape or you train to stay in shape, it's all about contracting your muscles so your body will add muscle. The more lean muscle you have, the more calories you burn. The ideal fat-burning routine involves high-intensity exercise (80 percent of maximum) for 20 minutes at a time. A complete body-weight training program means just that: pushing or pulling your body against the force of gravity. And a free-weight resistance training program can be performed at home using minimal equipment. So, are you ready to build a better you in just 20 minutes? Here's how:

Exercise bands - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **The Only Equipment You'll Need**

- Stability ball
- Pair of dumbbells or one kettlebell
- Steps or a "step-up" platform
- Resistance bands with handles
- One mini band to place around the ankles
- Chin-up bar

What You Need to Know Before Starting

Begin each workout with 3-5 minutes of warm-up exercises (see below). Then chose a workout from one of the eight routines I've provided and perform the 3-4 exercises in that routine as a circuit for the rest of the time (approximately 15 minutes). Complete just one set of each exercise before progressing to the next one,

and then repeat the entire circuit. In other words, do as many rounds as possible of each exercise in the routine for 15 minutes. All exercises are explained in detail below.

Stopwatch - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Complete at least four different exercise routines per week, choosing one routine each day. Rest at least one day per week. (If you have the time and energy, try to do 20 minutes of aerobic exercise (jogging, cycling, etc.) two other days of the week. See the Interval Training section at the end of this article. So, you might train with the routines on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, and do interval training on Tuesday and Thursday. Do 8 to 10 reps of each movement in the routine as a circuit, resting a maximum of 30-45 seconds between exercises. The goal over time is to be able to complete three circuits of the routine within 15 minutes.

Warming Up Your Core

The exercises in this warm-up are geared toward developing good core stability. They target the strength endurance of the abdominal, obliques, low back and gluteal muscles.

Plank: Start to get in a push-up position, but bend your elbows and rest your weight on your forearms instead of your hands. Your body should form a straight line from your shoulders to your ankles. Make a bridge with your body by supporting yourself on your elbows and toes, forming a straight line with your body, like a "plank." Make sure your low back is in a neutral position, bracing your stomach to maintain it; imagine you're trying to move your belly button back to your spine. Don't let the low back sag. Start with holding for 20 seconds, breathing steadily. As you build endurance, you can do one 60-second set, then progress to two sets of 60-second holds.

Side plank: On your side, form a bridge with your body by supporting yourself on one elbow and the outside edge of one foot. Your body should form a straight line from head to ankles as you lift your hips so your body stays in a straight line, like a plank. Pull your abs in as far as you can and hold this position for 10 to 30 seconds, breathing steadily. Make sure your top hip and shoulder are directly above the bottom hip and shoulder. Hold the straight-line position. Relax. Try for any combination of reps that gets you up to 30 seconds; build up to holding for one minute. Repeat on your other side. Perform 1-2 repetitions on each side.

Gluteal bridge: Place your feet on the floor and your neck and head on a stability ball. Squeezing your gluteal (buttocks) muscles, push your hips up until your back, hips and knees are in a straight line. Make

sure your back is in neutral and focus on your gluteals to hold the position. Complete three sets of 30 seconds each, double leg. Progress to one-leg bridges, three sets of 30 seconds each per leg.

Dynamic Warm-Ups

Once the core warm-ups look easy and feel easy, you can stop doing them as a precursor to your workouts. Instead, begin your workout program with the following dynamic warm-ups:

Straight leg swings: Swing your leg forward and keep it straight. Only go as high as your flexibility allows. You will feel this in your hamstring (back of leg). Try 8-10 reps.

Plie squat: Stand with your feet wide, toes pointing out. Maintain erect posture and tighten abs; inhale and lower yourself straight down. Exhale as you push up through your heels and squeeze your glutes. Do 8-10 reps.

Forward lunge: Stand with your feet hip width apart and abs tight. Take a big step forward with your right leg, allowing your right knee to bend at 90 degrees. When your foot touches the ground, the back leg will also bend. Exhale and push back with the right foot, pushing through the heel. Repeat for 10 reps or so and then switch legs. You will feel this in your glutes and quads.

Warrior lunge: Start with feet hip-width apart, toes pointing forward and abs tight. Take a big step backward with the left leg, allowing the right knee to bend to 90 degrees. Simultaneously extend both arms up toward the ceiling to feel a stretch in your hip flexor. Push off with your left foot to return to start, allowing your arms to drop back down to your sides. Alternate back and forth until you have completed all reps (10 per side).

8 Exercise Routines to Choose From

<u>Routine 1</u>

Squat: Start with feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing out only slightly. Take a deep breath and squat down. Pretend you are moving the hips backward to sit in a chair. Feel the body weight pressing down through both heels. Lower yourself to a knee bend where the thighs are parallel to the floor (at least 90 degrees). At the bottom, think "butt" and activate the gluteal muscles to help return to the start position while breathing out - this helps support the spine. Start with body weight only, performing 8 repetitions;

progress to using a dowel or light bar across the chest. This can be progressed by holding dumbbells or a kettlebell in one hand or both hands. *Aim to increase the weight you can lift for 8 reps.*

Pull-ups: Hang from a chin-up bar with an underhand grip, your hands spaced about shoulder-width apart and arms straight. Pull yourself up as you keep your elbows pointing down, and then slowly drop to the starting position. Make sure your chin goes above the bar on each repetition. If you can't even do one, be persistent; eventually you will be able to. *Try to build to 5 reps.*

push up - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Push-ups:** Standard push-ups: Get in a push-up position with your hands about shoulder-width apart. Bend at the elbows while keeping your back straight, until your chin almost touches the floor, then push back up. Do 6 reps. Once you've got this down, progress to stability ball push-ups. This takes your push-ups to the next level - doing them with your feet on a stability ball. Keep your body straight; don't let your hips sag or stick your butt up in the air. This has core-strengthening benefits and arm benefits. *Do as many as you can with strict form.*

Repeat Routine (Remember Your 20-Minute Limit)

Routine 2

Stability ball hammy: Perform this exercise with the soles of your feet on a stability ball and your back on the floor. Start with the whole back on the floor, knees slightly bent, with legs up on the ball. Push down through the feet into the ball, pushing the hips up at the same time. Lift hips until there is a straight line through the knee, hip and shoulder, keeping upper back and neck on the floor. Lower your hips to an inch off the ground, then repeat. *Start with 8 reps with two feet on the ball and build to 15 reps as you get stronger.*

Overhead shoulder press: Begin to perform with a band with handles, progress to a pair of dumbbells, then progress to a kettlebell. When using the band, stand on the band with both feet with a handle in each hand. Stand with good posture, holding the handles at your side, palms facing sides, raise the arms to shoulder height, then raise the arms overhead. Keep the elbows stiff. The finish position is with the hands above the head, palms facing forward. Retain good posture, without using the trunk or rotating the body during the movement, and finish with shoulders wide and relaxed. *Start with 8 reps, aiming to increase the weight lifted but continuing with 8 reps. If you are using the kettlebell, you can press one arm at a time and then switch sides. (Can also be performed on one leg to challenge stability.)*

Mountain climbers: Kneel on all fours, your hands in line with but slightly wider than your shoulders. Straighten your left leg completely and lift your right knee toward your chest. You should be on the balls of your feet, positioned like a sprinter in the starting blocks. *Now quickly switch leg positions as many times as you can for 30 to 45 seconds.*

Standing triceps extensions: Standing in good posture, do not arch the back. Hold one dumbbell in both hands behind the head. Raise the forearms and lock out the elbows. Lower the forearms. *Start with 8 reps, aiming to increase the weight lifted but continuing with 8 reps.*

Repeat Routine as Time Allows

Routine 3

Step-up: Start with a dowel or barbell across your back, with one foot on a step or bench, high enough to ensure your knees and hips are bent at an angle of around 90 degrees. Push down through the heel of the foot upon the step and extend the leg, rising up onto the step. Then lower down, taking all the weight back onto the same leg, leaving the foot on the step. When the support leg touches down behind the step, begin to push up again. In this way, most of the work is done with the leg on the step. Start by mastering the technique with 8 reps per side, progressing to holding a pair of dumbbells in each hand. Then progress to holding a kettlebell in one hand at a time. *Aim to increase the weight you can lift for 8 reps.*

bells up - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Up-chop kneel**: Kneel with a band or tubing handle attached below hip height. Grasp the handle in both hands to the side of the hip nearest the band. Lift the arms up and at the same time, rotate the shoulders away from the anchor, keeping hips facing forward and arms straight. *Complete 8-10 reps on each side.*

Down-chop kneel: Begin with the handle attached above head height, grasping the handle in both hands above the head to the side of the band. Keeping the hips facing front and the arms straight, pull the hands down and turn the shoulders away from the band. *Complete 8-10 reps on each side.*

Reverse flys: Lie face down on a stability ball or bench with head and neck just off the edge of the ball or bench, holding a dumbbell in each hand, arms straight out to the side. Lift the dumbbells off the floor until the hands are level with the body, arms remaining straight out to the side. *Complete 8 reps. Aim to increase the weight lifted for 8 reps.*

Repeat Routine as Time Allows

Routine 4

Band side step: Place a mini band around your ankles. Stand with your feet hip width apart and get into a semi-squat position. Step to the side with your left leg, and then bring your right leg toward the left leg, but not all the way (to keep some tension on the band). Continue across the room stepping out with your left leg. Return to the other side of the room facing the same way but stepping out with your right foot. NOTE: make sure the foot doesn't get out from under the knee. *Take at least 6 steps in each direction.*

Bench press on stability ball: With a dumbbell in each hand, lie on your back on a stability ball, with your feet on the floor and with your hands just beyond shoulder-width apart (out to the sides and bent at 90 degrees). Your head and neck should be supported by the ball. Hold up your hips so they are even with your knees and keep your abs tight. Exhale as you press dumbbells up directly over your chest toward the ceiling. Inhale as you lower back down. *Repeat for 8 reps. Aim to increase the weight lifted for 8 reps.*

Bent-over row: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, abs tight and knees bent. Bend forward at the waist, keeping your back flat. Hold a dumbbell in each hand, arms hanging down and palms facing your legs. Exhale as you bring the dumbbells toward the chest while squeezing the shoulder blades together. Inhale as you lower the weight. *Repeat for 8 reps. Aim to increase the weight lifted for 8 reps.*

Vertical jumps: Stand with feet hip- to shoulder-width apart. Squat down slightly, swinging your arms back, and then rapidly jump up as high as you can, driving your arms upward. Make sure you fully extend your hips, knees and ankles at takeoff. Land softly on the balls of your feet and absorb your landing with a squat. *Perform 8 reps, building up to 10 reps. (You may need to rest for 1-2 minutes after this one.)*

Repeat Routine as Time Allows

Routine 5

Romanian deadlift: Place your feet hip-width apart, abs tight and holding a dumbbell in each hand. Bend your knees to 20 degrees and keep your back straight. Keep your eyes focused straight ahead and your shoulder blades pinched together. Lower the dumbbells down your legs toward the floor (making sure to keep your back flat) until you feel a stretch in the hamstrings. Inhale as you lower the weight and then exhale and squeeze the glutes as you come back to your starting position. You will feel this in your glutes

and hamstrings. Perform 8 reps.

Power skips: This is a simple skip, performed very dynamically. The aim is to drive up as high as possible with each skip, then land softly and step onto the other foot to drive up again. *Perform 10 skips (5 each leg) and increase to 3 sets of 20 skips.*

Reverse crunch: Lie on your back with arms out to the side, then lift your legs off the floor with knees bent. Focusing on your abs, curl your pelvis and low back off the floor, crunching up. Don't kick or swing your legs to gain momentum - the slower you do the movement, the more effective it is. *Complete 20 reps. Progress by adding a dumbbell between the ankles to increase the load lifted by the abs.*

running - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Repeat Routine as Time Allows**

Routine 6

Arms-out squat: Standing with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, grasp one dumbbell or kettlebell in your hands and hold it straight out from your eyes. Now try to press the ends together as you simultaneously push your hips back, bend your knees and lower your body until your thighs are parallel to the floor (squat). Pause, and push back up. *Complete 8 reps. Aim to increase the weight lifted for 8 reps.*

Bench press: Lie face-up on the stability ball or a flat bench with your feet flat on the floor. Hold a pair of dumbbells above your chest with straight arms, palms facing each other. Slowly lower the weights to the sides of your chest. Pause and then push them back up. Bring the weights all the way down to the sides of your chest. *Complete 8 reps. Aim to increase the weight lifted for 8 reps.*

Single-leg deadlift: Stand holding the dumbbells or a single kettlebell in your hand in front of your thighs; feet slightly more than shoulder-width apart. Raise one foot and extend it behind you, just off the floor. Contract your glutes, brace your abs, and keep your spine naturally arched. Focusing on balance, lower yourself until your torso is parallel to the floor. Initiate the movement by pushing your hips back. Push back up to the starting position. *Perform 8 reps per leg.*

Back extension: Lie on the floor on your stomach. Keep your feet flat on the floor. Hold your arms straight along the sides of your body. Your body should form a straight line. Begin to lift the head and torso off the floor as high as you can. Lower your torso. Raise your upper body up again off the floor. At this point, you should have a slight arch in your back, and your shoulder blades should be pulled together. Pause for a

second, then repeat. *Complete 8-10 reps.*

Repeat Routine as Time Allows

Routine 7

Deadlifts with a row: Keeping your knees slightly bent and your back arched, push your hips back to lower the dumbbells or kettlebell to your shins. At the bottom, draw the weight up toward your rib cage, (pull the dumbbell up until your elbows pass your torso) lower it, and then return to the starting standing position. *Complete 8 reps.*

Band pulldowns: Stand facing the handles of the bands as you reach up and grasp the handles with an overhand grip that's 4 to 6 inches wider than your shoulders. The band needs to be anchored at a high place above the door or ceiling. Sit on the floor, letting the resistance of the bar extend your arms above your head. When you're in position, pull the handles down until it touches your upper chest. Hold this position for a second, then return to the starting position. *Complete 8-15 reps.*

Traditional crunch: Lie on your back with your knees bent and your hands behind your ears. Slowly crunch up, bringing your shoulder blades off the ground. *Complete 12-15 reps.*

Repeat Routine as Time Allows

Routine 8

Dumbbell squat to press: Stand holding dumbbells at your shoulders with your palms facing each other. Lower yourself into a squat until your thighs are at least parallel to the floor. Push back up and press the weights overhead. Return to the starting position. Try to keep your arms in line with your ears. *Complete 8 reps. Aim to increase the weight lifted for 8 reps.*

Standing press-out: With your feet shoulder-width apart, hold a dumbbell or kettlebell by its ends and next to your chest. Try to press the ends together as you simultaneously push the dumbbell away from your body and slightly up (to eye level) until your arms are straight. Pause, and pull the dumbbell back as you squeeze your shoulder blades together. *Complete 8 reps. Aim to increase the weight lifted for 8 reps.*

Up-chop kneel: Kneel with a band or tubing handle attached below hip height. Grasp the handle in both hands to the side of the hip nearest the band. Lift the arms up and at the same time, rotate the shoulders

away from the anchor, keeping hips facing forward and arms straight. *Complete 8-10 reps on each side.*

bells down - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Down-chop kneel:** Begin with the handle attached above head height, grasping the handle in both hands above the head to the side of the band. Keeping the hips facing front and the arms straight, pull the hands down and turn the shoulders away from the band. *Complete 8-10 reps on each side.*

Repeat Routine as Time Allows

Don’t Forget About Interval Training

On the two days you’re not doing one of the above routines (Tuesdays and Thursdays), make sure to do some interval training to help burn fat. Running intervals, or sprints with intermittent rest periods, burns more fat than when you run at slow, consistent speeds. Run outside, or jump on a bike or a treadmill if you have one. If you don’t have a treadmill or can’t get outside, use a jump rope or a kettlebell. Learn how to perform kettlebell swings for the interval portion of your workout.

Sprint, jump rope, or perform swings for 15 seconds (if you cannot maintain the sprint for the whole 15 seconds,slow down a bit so that you can) and rest for 30 seconds. After resting for 30 seconds, repeat the activity for another 15 seconds, then rest for another 30 seconds. Try to repeat this as many times or until you feel "done" - in other words, don’t get sick performing this routine.

After four to five sessions of this, it should begin to get easier. Progress to 20 seconds on and 30 seconds off for 10 cycles for the next four to five sessions. Then progress to 30 seconds on and 30 seconds off for 10 cycles for the next four to five sessions, and then go to 30 seconds on 20 seconds off for 5 cycles (that’s right, more work than rest - but lower volume) for four to five sessions.

Perform the intervals two times per week with a day of rest between. This is interval training! Before starting your sprints, start out with 5 minutes of fast walking, or do the dynamic warm-ups listed at the beginning of this article. Then do interval training for a total of 15 minutes on the days you are not performing routines.

20 Minutes to a Healthier, Happier You

This 20-minute workout will allow you to spend more time in your fat-burning zone - without having to spend your whole day in a gym. This workout offers a variety of exercises and keeps the boredom down. Remember, it might be tough at first, but with each passing week, you will be able to perform more work. Some of you already know that you won't make much progress doing 3 sets of 10 exercises for the rest of your life. To achieve success, it's smarter to alternate workout cycles within a 10-12 week training period, an approach called *periodization*. This is what the 20-minute workout is all about! Be sure to follow a balanced diet in conjunction with this program. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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