

[IMAGE]

The 6-Minute Workout

By Editorial Staff

Think you can't get a great workout in only 6 minutes? Try these eight exercises and decide for yourself. We think you'll be too out of breath to object – and too pleased with the results to complain. Perform the following exercises consecutively for 30 seconds apiece, resting only to transition from one exercise to the next (15 seconds max). The only equipment you need: your body; a chair, box or other elevated surface; and a wall or flat vertical surface. The goal is to complete as many repetitions of each exercise within 30 seconds, but without sacrificing form or function. So do each exercise the right way as fast as you can. That means you avoid putting your neck, shoulders and back at risk; and make sure you're engaging the body parts that are supposed to be engaged (e.g., if you're doing bicycles – see exercise #6 below – and your neck hurts, you're doing something wrong). Ready? Let's get going!

1. Push-ups: Start with a basic move: the push-up. Do as many as you can with good form within 30 seconds. Good form means your elbows are approximately shoulder-width and your head / buttocks / feet are essentially aligned (no dipping, slumping or twisting). As you descend into each repetition, your elbows should bend back toward your feet, rather than out perpendicular to your body (which will engage your shoulders and risk injury). Keep your core (abs) tight throughout.

exercise - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *2. Plank:* Speaking of your core, once 30 seconds has expired, transition from push-up position to plank position, which really means changing your point of contact with the floor from hands (push-ups) to forearms (plank). Bend your elbows to a 90 degree angle at approximately shoulder height and rest on your forearms for 30 seconds, holding your core tight. Again, avoid flexing your lower back, which could risk injury.

3. Wall squats: Transition from plank position to a wall squat, which is as simple as standing with your back against a wall and lowering yourself down until your knees are bent to a 70-degree angle or so with your body. Hold for 30 seconds. Avoid slumping your shoulders. Tighten your abs.

4. Triceps dips: Grab a chair (or use a similar firm surface that won't give way) and perform triceps dips for 30 seconds. Position yourself so you're facing away from the chair, etc., and support yourself with your

hands (fingers facing forward). With arms extended completely, lower yourself by bending your elbows to a 90 degree angle and then raise yourself back up so your arms are extended again. The key here is to keep your elbows in a fixed position (except for their bending motion) so you work the triceps (the back of your upper arm).

5. *Step-ups*: Take that same chair / stable surface and transition into step-ups / step-downs. It's as easy as it sounds. Stand in front of the chair and step one foot up, then the second foot up, then the first foot down, then the second foot down; repeat for 30 seconds as quickly as you can. Keep your back straight and concentrate on the movement to avoid falling. Balance is more important than speed here.

6. *Bicycles*: Time to ride a bicycle for 30 seconds – without a bike! Lie on the floor, knees bent toward your chest, hands behind your neck for support (and to help engage the abdominals). Elevate your shoulders slightly off the floor and move your legs through a pedaling motion for 30 seconds and feel the burn in both the upper and lower abdominals. Avoid pulling on your neck with your hands; just keep them there for support.

7. *Side planks – right side*: Finish your 6-minute workout by assuming the plank position again, but instead of facing the floor, your starting position is on your side, supported by one elbow, with your elbow-side leg / foot supporting the other leg / foot. Rather than hold the position for 30 seconds, as in the original plank, lower your body slowly and deliberately (bending your side toward the floor and raising back up again). This not only works your core as you hold the pose, but specifically engages the obliques (what many refer to as love handles).

8. *Side planks – left side*: After you've done as many reps as you can in 30 seconds on the right side, switch sides (opposite elbow supporting your body) and repeat the process. Keep it up for 30 seconds, rest for another 15 seconds ... and there you have it! Eight exercises of 30 seconds each (4 minutes), with 15-second transitions / rests after each (2 minutes): The 6-Minute Workout.

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