

[IMAGE]

Get in Great Shape Without Ever Leaving Your House

By Editorial Staff

Turn off the infomercials, ditch the gym membership and put down the get-fit-quick gadgets; it's time to get in the best shape of your life the old-fashioned way, right from the comfort of your own home. Believe it or not, some of the best exercises can be accomplished using household "equipment" commonly used for other purposes. Here are four great exercises to get you started:

1. Chair dips: The chair is one of the most versatile pieces of exercise equipment available in your home, which is ironic since it's primarily used for sitting. In this case, we're using it to work the triceps – the large muscle group at the rear of the upper arm – while working the abs / core at the same time. To perform chair dips, sit in a chair with sturdy arms. Grasp the arms and slowly raise your buttocks off the chair, straightening your arms as you do so. Then lower yourself back down and repeat. *Keys:* Keep your back straight; keep your elbows in a fixed position so you are working the triceps exclusively; keep your core tight.

2. Stair chest presses: All it takes is a set of stairs and you can get the top and bottom of your chest – the pectoral muscles – in great shape. You're actually doing push-ups, but instead of the standard way, you're using the stairs to incorporate one of two simple variations: hands up (feet on the floor, hands facing up the stairs) or the more challenging hands down (hands on the floor, feet on the stairs). *Keys:* As with any push-up, keep your head, back and buttocks in a straight line; position your hands just slightly past shoulder width and at chest level, so as to avoid stressing the shoulders. This is particularly important with the reverse (hands down) press.

home exercise - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *3. Box / table jumps:* Any hard surface that can survive your body-weight and won't be damaged by repeatedly jumping on it will work for this great exercise, a plyometric maneuver that strengthens the legs, buttocks and core. The exercise is simple: Bend your knees, swing your arms slightly, and hop up onto the surface; then hop back down and repeat. You choose the height of the item you're jumping on. *Keys:* Pick a stable surface. (A metal bench or short concrete wall will work, as will some step stools, as long as they're stable / durable); progress gradually and carefully from short-jump heights to larger heights; focus on balance.

4. Laundry Lifts: As any hard-working mom – and yes, the occasional dad – will tell you, housework can be quite a workout. Beyond carrying clothes to and from the laundry room, which can be exercise aplenty, especially if you have to navigate flights of stairs, try a few laundry lifts to work your upper body and shoulders. Raise a laundry-filled basket (preferably with handles) over your head repeatedly, or in front of your face, starting at shoulder level; you can even lie on a bench or other surface and do laundry-basket presses (similar to bench presses) to work your chest. *Keys:* Whenever lifting weight over your head, go slowly and don't overload; for shoulder presses, press up without locking out your elbows; for chest presses, lie on a surface that allows your elbows the most room for movement to give your chest the stretch it needs (a bench is best because you can lower the laundry basket all the way to your chest without your elbows hitting the floor).

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