

15 exercises to tackle belly hang, a saggy bum and back ache

You can anti-age your body by adopting this simple but effective training regimen



Strength training is key to improving mood and preventing belly fat Getty

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Staying active as we age is a good idea. In addition to keeping midlife weight gain at bay, it also prevents painful osteoporosis and sciatica, and improves mood, hot flushes and cardiorespiratory function.

As most of us know, consistency is key. In a recent study tracking more than 11,000 women, the women who maintained at least 150 minutes of exercise a week for 15 years had better health scores than the women who didn't – even if they only started exercising in middle age.

“By managing high blood pressure and cholesterol and thus the development of coronary artery disease and Type 2 diabetes, keeping active in midlife can even prevent premature death by up to 30 per cent,” explains Dr Aaisha Opel, a consultant cardiologist and electrophysiologist at OneWelbeck.

“Exercise is essential as we age,” agrees Dalton Wong, a personal trainer and the founder of TwentyTwo Training. “We need to make sure we focus on all aspects equally. Strength training is key as it keeps build lean muscle mass while preventing excess weight gain and osteoporosis.”

“Mobility and stability are also essential for encouraging supported and flexible joints and healthy posture. Last and certainly not least, varying levels of cardiovascular training are key for heart health and, subsequently, longevity.” There's no better time than now to start.

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Exercises to banish belly hang

These four exercises should be done in a circuit so you get a metabolic effect which is great for cardiovascular training. Dumbbells, water bottles or your own body weight can be used.

Reverse lunge to bicep curl

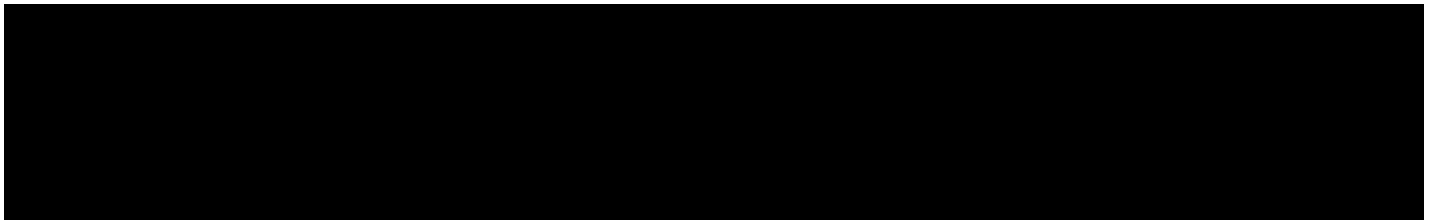


The lunge is a great lower-body strengthener and pairing it with a biceps curl makes it a total body exercise.

1. Start off holding a dumbbell or water bottle in each hand (or keep your hands by your sides if you're not using a weight) with both feet together. Step back with the right leg into a reverse lunge. Once you're down in the lunge with the right shin parallel to the floor, perform a bicep curl, bringing the palm to the shoulder.
2. Once the curl is completed, press through the right foot to return to standing and lower the hands to return to the start position.

Do: 2-4 sets of 12 reps per side

Shoulder taps



Shoulder taps are a natural progression from the plank as it uses upper body movement while keeping the body still using isometric contraction. A modified version can be done on the knees.

1. Start in a full plank position then take the right hand off the floor, tapping your left shoulder, keeping your body straight without shifting your weight.
2. Return the right hand to the start position with both hands on the floor then repeat using the left hand to the right shoulder.

Do: 2-4 sets of 12 reps per side

Lateral lunge

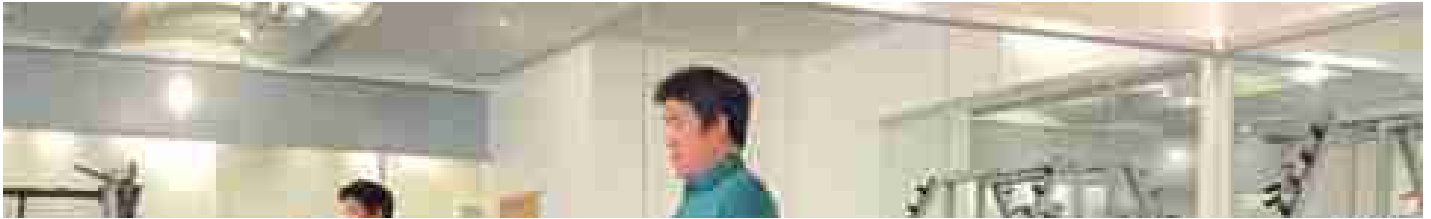


Lateral lunges target the adductors and abductors of the hip to develop balance, stability, and strength.

1. Start off holding a dumbbell or water bottle in each hand (or hands by your sides if you're not using a weight) with both feet together then step and lunge to the right. Your right knee should be bent at 90 degrees with your right glute activated and a stretch should be felt in the left inner thigh.
2. Return back to the starting position and repeat on the left leg.

Do: 2-4 sets of 12 reps per side

Dumbbell reverse fly



While it might look like it's working the arms, this is also a great exercise for the back, especially the rear deltoids, which allow you to perform functional movements like lifting, pushing, and pulling without injury.

1. Start off holding a dumbbell or water bottle in each hand (or hands by your sides if you're not using a weight) with feet hip-width apart and raise both arms out to the side, squeezing the shoulder blades and keeping your elbows unlocked and soft.
2. Slowly lower the arms back to the start position, allowing your arm rather than the weight of the dumbbell control the movement.

Do: 2-4 sets of 12 reps per side

Exercises to get rid of a saggy bottom

Working your glutes will tighten up your bottom and help alleviate hip pain because the stronger the muscles in your rear, the more stable the lower body.

A mini band can be used to increase the intensity of the first three exercises.

Mini-band glute bridge



The perfect exercise to help improve glute strength along with working the calves, hamstrings and back.

1. Start lying on your back with the feet shoulder-width apart and a mini band placed above the knees if required.
2. Drive up from the heels keeping tension in the mini band hold for a beat of one second at the top before slowly lowering to the floor.

Do: 2-4 sets of 20

Mini-band side-lying clams



The clam exercise is perfect for targeting the abductors which are stabilisers of the hips, knee and back.

1. Start lying on your right side with your knees bent, heels in line with your glutes, and a mini band placed above the knees.
2. Keeping your feet together, open your left knee upwards (like a clam shell) and then return back to the start position, keeping tension in the band throughout the movement and the hips in good alignment.

Do: 2-4 sets of 20 before repeating on your left side

Mini band squats



The mini-band squat helps the body maintain good knee alignment while squatting, avoiding internal knee rotation.

1. Start off with a mini band placed above the knees and feet hip-width apart.
2. Squat down into a sitting position until the thighs are at least parallel to the floor keeping tension in the band at all times and avoiding rounding the back before thrusting forward to stand.

Do: 2-4 sets of 20

Exercises to help with lower back pain

Developing strength in the core muscles that wrap around your midsection and improving spinal mobility back can reduce lumbar pain.

Cat-cow



This is a great stretch that works the whole spine alongside centring breathe work.

1. Start on all fours with your knees under your hips and hand under your shoulders before inhaling and curving your spine upwards and tilting your head up like a 'cow'.
2. Exhale and draw your belly to your spine, arching your back, tucking your tailbone and bringing your head and pelvis down like a cat.

Do: Two sets of 20

Bird-dog



The bird-dog is a foundational core and coordination exercise that strengthens and promotes good posture.

1. Start off on all fours with hips under knees and hands under shoulders before reaching the right arm out and the left leg back at the same time.
2. The spine should remain in a neutral position and there should be no shifting in weight. Return to the start position before repeating with the opposite arm and leg extended.

Do: 2-4 sets of 15 reps per side

Plank to side plank



This plank combo helps build the obliques, two layers of muscle along the sides of your core, allowing you to rotate and bend your trunk and protecting your spine.

1. Start off in a plank position either in a full plank or modified with elbows and toes on floor or elbows and knees and hold for 30-45 seconds.
2. Maintaining a straight line from nose to hips, lift your right arm and twist to the right side before holding a side plank on the left hand or elbow and knee or toes for 30-45 seconds.

Do: 2-4 sets of one rep per side

Glider mountain climbers



Mountain climbers are great for using your core to help stabilise the spine while the leg is moving, adding resistance with the glider.

1. Start off in a full plank position with gliders underneath the toes before bringing the right knee towards the chest keeping the lower back still and core activated.
2. Bring the right leg back to the start position and repeat on the left side, keeping the body still.

Do: 2-4 sets of 15 reps per side

Exercises for body strength and stronger bones

This strength programme is based on working on all the muscles that are behind us, also known as the posterior chain. These are the muscles that protect our hips and spine. As we get older we lose strength and run the risk of osteoporosis, so making sure that we have a strong hips, back and shoulders is essential for having a long health span.

Dumbbells or water bottles are essential for this plan and the exercises are done in a super set formula: alternating between exercises one and two then three and

four without rest.

Step-ups



The step-up gets the calves, hamstrings and glutes working in sync. Use a step, bench or stair, holding dumbbells by your side.

1. With a dumbbell or water bottle in either hand and arms by your sides, start with your right foot on a step and drive up through the right heel to stand on the step and straighten the right leg.
2. Bring the left leg onto the step next to the right foot before slowly stepping back down.

Do: 2-4 sets of 10 reps per side

Bent over rows



This back exercise is a simple, yet effective strengthener for the core and spine.

1. With a dumbbell or water bottle in either hand and arms by your sides, start with your feet shoulder-width apart before hinging at the hips to a 45-degree angle with the floor.
2. Bring the elbow back keeping them tucked in, 'rowing' the dumbbells up towards your chest before reversing the motion, keeping the body in the bent over position until the end of the set.

Do: 2-4 sets of 10 reps per side

Deadlift



The deadlift is a foundational strength-training exercise, which requires keeping your core contracted yet neutral to stabilise your spine and avoid any twisting, rounding, or arching through your torso.

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart holding a dumbbell in each hand in front of your thighs before activating your core and pulling your shoulder blades down your back as you begin to hinge forward at the hips.
2. Keeping the knees slightly bent, weight in the heels, hamstrings engaged, and lower back in neutral, hinge forward lowering the hands past the knees or as low as you can before driving the hips forward to return to the start position.

Do: 2-4 sets of 15 reps

Push-up



The push-up is a great upper body exercise that works the chest, triceps and core. A modified version can be done by having your arms elevated on a bench or table, or alternatively by placing your knees on the floor.

1. Start off in a high plank position with your core engaged and a straight line from your nose to your hips before slowly lowering your body with your elbows at a 45-degree angle relative to the torso.
2. Press up through the hands until the elbows are straight without locking.

Do: 2-4 sets of 15 reps

Videos by Jeff Gilbert

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