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How to 'Spot Tone' Your Way to a Beautiful Body

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INTRODUCTION TO TONING

This ebook sheds light on body toning, dispelling myths and uncovering truths to help you with your fitness goals and planning. For example, forget the idea that muscles can go from soft to firm or from firm to soft. That's a myth. Muscles either grow in size or they shrink. Period. Muscles do not "firm-up" or "tone".

Toning or firming-up is the production of muscle contractions by stimulating the nerves that control the muscle fibers. The resulting increase in muscle tissue with this process when combined with a low enough body-fat percentage, can allow you to see the definition and shape of the muscles, replacing the "jiggling" or non-firm / un-toned flabby areas.

How about this myth: You can spot-reduce fat, right? Unless you have liposuction done, no. So what is the way to reduce fat in specific places? The most effective way is with a regularly scheduled

combination program of aerobic exercises, strength training and good, healthy eating habits.

This ebook will present you with the most recent research and findings available so that you can learn more about body toning, covering as many bases as possible from A to Z. You'll find answers to questions like: No pain, no gain; right or wrong? I don't want to look like a bodybuilder, so should I still work on toning my body in a different manner? What is circuit-training and how does this affect toning? And do I need to worry about my diet or weight loss in order to tone? Note that the contents here are not presented from a medical practitioner, and that any and all health care planning should be made under the guidance of your own medical and health practitioners. The content within only presents an overview of toning research for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice from a professional physician.

STRETCHING EXERCISES TO BEGIN

STRETCHING EXERCISES -

Before beginning and ending any toning workout session, you need to warm up and cool down the body with stretching exercises. Here are some exercises that you can use. Some stretching rules-of-thumb are:

- Stretch with gentle and slow movements. Jerky motions are not effective and can cause injury.

- When possible, do each stretch on each side of the body. It needs a complete workout.
- Do not stretch injured muscles unless your healthcare provider approved your doing so beforehand.
- Hold each stretch for approximately 30 seconds.
- Only stretch to the point where you can feel a little tension, not pain.

Calves – Standing roughly 2 feet from a post, facing it, position your hands on the post. Gently stretch your right leg out straight behind you. Keep your foot flat on the floor. Lean into the post with your left leg bent at the knee. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to the start position. Repeat with other leg.

Thighs - Standing on your left foot, near a post or chair for support, if you prefer, gently pull your right heel toward your buttocks. Hold your right ankle with your right hand, keeping your back straight, knees together, body in a straight line. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to the start position. Repeat with other leg.

Hamstrings - Sitting on the floor, with your legs straight out and spread apart, reach out with your arms in front. Gently lean over, reaching towards your toes, chest heading down to the floor. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to the start position.

Shoulders & Chest - With your feet shoulder-width apart, stand with

your chin down, hands folded behind your back. Gently stretch your shoulders back and downward so that your shoulder blades are touching. Suck in your abdomen, no lower back arching allowed. Hold for about 30 seconds.

Pectorals (Chest) - Standing by a post, face your right side to the post. Step forward with your right leg. With your right forearm on the wall, shoulder at about a right angle, turn your upper body away from the wall. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to start position. Repeat with other side.

Shoulders - With your feet shoulder-width apart, stand and reach up with your right arm. Bend your right elbow, bringing your hand down, behind your head right between your shoulder blades. Then lift up with your left arm, hold your right elbow and pull it toward your head. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to start position. Repeat with other arm.

Side Flexors - With your feet shoulder-width apart, stand and raise your arms up over your head. Bend your elbows and hold your forearms with your hands. Reach up with your left elbow, while bending gently to the right. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to the start position. Repeat on the other side.

Buttocks - On mat or carpeted area, lie on your back. Lift your right knee up to your chest. Grasp your knee, wrapping both arms around

it. Hold for about 30 seconds with your head, shoulder and left leg all in relaxed positions. Repeat with other leg.

Groin – On a mat or carpeted area, sit up straight. Bring your ankles together with your hands toward your groin. Push down on your knees with your elbows. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to start position.

Lower Back – On a mat or carpeted area, lie on your back, hands behind your head. With feet and legs together, bend your legs at the knees, so that your calves and thighs are at a right angle.

Press your shoulders on the ground while bringing both knees over to the ground on the right. Hold for about 30 seconds. Return to the start position. Repeat on other side.

TONING TIPS: UPPER AREAS: ARMS, CHEST, UPPER TORSO

Now it's time to take a look at the muscles in the Upper Body Area and then see how toning works in relation to them. These muscle groups in the upper back, shoulders, chest and arms are:

Upper Body Muscle Group – This group contains the trapezius and rhomboids. The trapezius muscle, shaped like a triangle, extends from the middle of your back up, covering the shoulder blades and on to your neck. They help with shoulder blade and backward head movements. Toning the trapezius tones your shoulders, strengthening the back and neck against positional pain (like from lying down too long, sitting in the same place too long, etc.) The rhomboids, smaller

muscles in the mid-back that help move the shoulder blades, reach upwards, just under the neck's base. Toning them will help with good posture.

Shoulder Muscle Group – This group of muscles includes the deltoids and rotators. The deltoids, thick triangular muscles covering shoulder joints, can be divided up into three areas; the anterior or front, lateral or side, and posterior or rear. Working these areas will help with shoulder range-of-motion, function and defined appearance or shape. The rotators or rotator cuffs are a group of muscles under the shoulder that position the arm. Toning them draws them in, under the arm.

Chest Muscle Group – This group contains the pectorals or pecs, four flat muscles, two on each side chest-front. They assist with upper arm and shoulder movements. While big fan-shaped pectoralis major muscles atop the lower pecs pull the arms across the chest, lower pectoralis minor muscles press the shoulders down. Working and toning this muscles group in men helps increase and define or sculpt the chest. In women, working and toning these helps provide support and lift for the bust.

Arm Muscles – This group includes the biceps, triceps and forearm muscles. Biceps are large muscles in the upper arm that contract to bend the elbows. Workouts and toning can help define and give shape to biceps. Triceps, the large muscles that travel along the back of the

upper arm, work opposite the biceps to straighten out the elbow. Toning these can help eliminate excess downward “flab” or loose skin that shows when an arm is extended outwards. And forearm muscles, between the wrist and the elbow, help with multiple wrist hand and finger movements. Toning them is said to help with wrist afflictions and susceptibilities like Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

UPPER BODY WORKOUT – Here are some toning exercises that can show results in as early as a few weeks, if worked every other day. First start with slow and gentle warm up stretching activities for about 5 minutes (no weights needed yet), pulling one arm at a time completely over to the other side, reaching up to the sky, bending over to touch your toes, reaching backwards, etc.

Then begin to tone your upper body by exercising with hand-held weights for resistance. There’s no need to run out and purchase any special kinds. Rather these can be cans of soda, canned foods or water bottles – anything that you can grasp firmly, yet comfortably. Their weight range should be around 1lb-10lb. Choose weights that are somewhat challenging, but that don’t force you to struggle.

With your weights, continue with about 10-12 repetitions (reps) of the following exercises, lasting a total of about 8-10 minutes.

Exercise A – Upper: Chest & Shoulder Lifts - Lie on your back. With your weights in your hands facing upwards, stretch your arms out to

your sides. Bend your elbows a little and lift your arms up over your chest, until hands almost come in contact with each other. Go back to beginning position. Repeat.

Exercise B – Upper: Chest and Shoulder Half Circles - Lie on your back. With your weights in your hands facing upwards, stretch your arms up over your head. Stop & hold briefly. Then take them from above your head down to your hips in a half circle motion, going by your sides. Stop & hold briefly. Take weight back to beginning position. Repeat.

Exercise C – Upper: Chest and Back Support - With your legs straight out in front of you, sit with good posture, your back straight and supported against a couch, wall or chair. Start by holding the weights at your chest, elbows out parallel with the your legs. Push your weights out straight in front of you. Next, pull them back. Repeat.

Exercise D – Upper: Shoulder and Upper Arm Raises - With your feet shoulder width apart, stand. Raise your arms straight up over your head. Have weights in hand and turn palms facing behind you. Gently lower your arms forward and downward at the same time, without bending or locking at the elbows. Stop at shoulder-level. Return to starting position. Repeat.

Exercise E – Upper: Back and Shoulders “Tensors” – With your feet shoulder width apart, stand. Lower your arms to your sides. And hold

the weights with your hands facing outwards. Slowly tense your shoulder and upper back muscles (up and down motion). Repeat.

Exercise F – Upper: Arms, Back and Shoulders Chin-Ups – With feet a spaced little apart, stand. Hold your weights with your arms straight down in front of you. (Weights should just about touch.) then with elbows bent, bring the weights towards your chin, elbows going out to the sides. Take weights back out to beginning position. Repeat.

Exercise G – Upper: Arms, Back and Shoulders Bends - With your feet a little apart, stand. Hold your weights palm-side out, bending over like you're touching your toes. Then without rising, bring your arms out to your sides, parallel with the floor. Remember when keeping the elbows straight not to lock them. Gently ease back into the beginning position. Repeat.

Exercise H – Upper: Arms and Chest Push-Ups – With knees of toes on the floor, place palms on the floor, hands should-width apart. Do old-fashioned push-ups with your back straight, never reaching the floor all the way so that you come in contact with it.

Exercise I – Upper: Arm Curls – Sit with your back straight and supported. With your arms hanging down by your sides, hold your weights with palms facing out or up. Gently curl arms up towards shoulders. Uncurl. Note: keep back straight and don't move the rest of your body - -just the arms. Repeat.

Exercise J – Upper: Forearm Tilts – Sit or stand. With your weights in hand, work one arm at a time, reaching out with your arm straight ahead, but not locking the elbow. When your arm is out at its farthest point, stop. Move wrist up and down a few times while holding the weight. Stop. Switch palm side so that you work out both upward and downward (over and under) wrist motions. Return to beginning position. Work other arm / wrist in same manner.

One of the most difficult parts of your working out may be a common one many face: staying motivated. Tips to stay motivated include vary your routine, use different weights from time to time, intensify your workout, work out in different settings, reward yourself afterwards with something healthy like your favorite beverage, put your workout to music, journal regularly monitoring your progress and how great you feel.

Supplemental Help for Arms

Here are supplemental toning exercises for arms. Use them to vary your planning and adjust as needed for intensity, repetition, etc. to fit your program.

Flabby Upper Arms – Three helpful exercises here. Do about a dozen pushups, your favorite style. Do some reverse crab walking with about a dozen reverse push-ups. And do some shadowboxing with light weights in hand. Punch 20 each of crossovers, undercuts and hooks.

Flabby Lower Arms – Couple things to help here. Dips or sit on the edge of hard surface, palms on each side of your hips, fingers hanging over the edge. Walk your feet out some getting your hips off the bed. Bend your knees & lower yourself until your elbows are at 90 degrees with upper arms parallel to the floor. Rise up and lower yourself with your arms about a dozen times. Repeat two sets. Experienced people stretch legs out straight.

Other help is called kickbacks. With small weight, reach over at the waist with hand on a surface with back flat. With weight in other hand, bring bent elbow up to side for start position. With elbow at side, reach back until elbow is straight, then lower and repeat a dozen times. Repeat two more sets. Experienced people may increase weights.

Carpal Tunnel – Use light weights or wrist weights with resistance work to help wrists, but don't grip them too tightly. Other exercises that work well are swimming, gently squeezing a rubber ball, wrist curls, placing wrist rests on keyboards.

Supplemental Help for Chest

Here are additional workouts for the chest, two more push-up versions. Modified Push-Ups: start in an upright position with arms shoulder-width apart, elbows bent a little and knees (bent) on the floor. Object is to maintain head, neck and back all in a straight line

throughout exercise. Move body down towards the floor, slow and steady, stopping when upper arms parallel the floor. Rise to start, slow and steady again. No locking elbows.

Alternative Push-Ups: start in upright position with arms shoulder-width apart, elbows bent a little, feet together. Object again is to maintain head, neck and back in straight line throughout exercise. Move body down towards the floor, slow and steady, stopping when upper arms parallel floor. Rise to start, slow and steady again. No locking elbows. For resistance, have someone GENTLY rest their feet on your back while you perform this exercise.

Supplemental Help for Upper Torso

And here are supplemental exercises for the upper torso / upper back. Upright Row: With feet shoulder-width apart, stand with arms down, crossed at the wrists. Pull the arms up and back so that upper arm becomes parallel with floor, shoulders in line with torso the entire exercise. Return to the down position, slow & steady. Add resistance work by anchoring anchor a band underneath feet. With band ends in each hand, cross wrists. Continue as above (without bands).

Shrugs are also good to add. With light-weights in hand, stand, feet shoulder-width apart, hands at sides. Raise shoulders up in shrug. Hold. Slowly lower shoulders to start position.

TONING TIPS: MIDDLE AREAS: STOMACH OR MID-SECTION

Sit-ups burn fat off the belly, myth or reality? Myth. Truth is, your body's overall fat plays an important part in how flat or round your stomach is. And since the body's fat storage is basically one system, you cannot just lose fat in your stomach. On the contrary, many people think doing sit-ups will make their stomachs thinner, but leg exercises are reported to burn more than four times the body fat than sit-ups.

And while many people strive for a flat stomach, the reality is that the human abdominal or stomach area is meant to have a rounded shape instead. Of course age, gender and individual genetic body-type play important roles in the actual shape.

However, the first issue of focus with this toning area is to focus on posture. Instead of "flattening" the stomach, trimming pounds with improved diet and exercise along with better posture can improve a potbelly or other unhealthy appearance. Here are points to ponder with regards to a healthy posture, in case you'd like more than "stand up straight" for guidelines. When standing, bend a little at the knees. Then with shoulders back, head evenly aligned (not cocky at an angle or anything) and tailbone aimed towards the floor, "suck it in," or contract the stomach muscles.

Now for dealing a little more directly with those stomach muscles. Here are some toning exercises.

Step 1 – Warm-up time first. Begin with stretches for 5 to 10 minutes that gradually build up to light cardio activity like jogging in place, walking, biking or jumping rope.

Step 2 – Next get down on the floor; an exercise mat or carpeted area, and do 20 to 30 crunches and reverse-curls apiece as follows. For crunches, with your knees bent a little and feet flat on the floor, lie on your back with your arms wrapped together across your chest. Then do this two-step: (1) exhale while raising your head, shoulders and chest off the floor, tightening your stomach muscles as you bend forward towards your hips, pause... (2) inhale while gently and slowly returning ALMOST to the original position, keeping your head just off the floor. Repeat. For those who are intermediary or advanced toners, place your hands behind or beside your head (and don't pull it), place hands straight out over your head or pause for a couple seconds before inhaling for a more intense workout.

Next it's time for reverse-curls. To work the lower front and side abdominal muscles, begin on your back on the carpeted area or mat again. With hands on the floor and knees bent towards your chest with hips off the floor, continue to lift your hips, contracting the stomach muscles and bringing hips further towards your chest. This exercise focuses on lifting the pelvis toward your rib cage using the abdominals without swinging the legs. Advanced toners can place their hands in

the air leaving their elbows on the floor for increased intensity.

Step 3 – Head back to the cardio activity that you were doing at the end of Step 1 above and continue doing that for 8 to 10 minutes.

Step 4 – Head back to the carpeted area or mat for 20 to 30 imaginary bike pedal touches. In other words, you place your hands behind your head while lying on the floor. Then with our knees up at about a 45-degree angle from the floor, you slowly pedal an imaginary bike while touching your right elbow to your left knee and vice-versa, then alternating elbow to other knees, all while breathing at a natural, normal pace. For those who are at intermediary or advanced levels, you can make the angle of your legs near 180-degrees or straight, without locking the knees for more intensive toning.

Step 5 – Beginners can stop here. Intermediate and advanced toners can return to another round of Step 3 above.

For the best results, these toning activities should be performed three to four times a week. Work up the routine until gradually the cardio portions last from 10 to 15 minutes each. And add your other exercises for the upper and lower body areas, and of course a well-balanced diet.

Supplemental Help for Abs

Here are ideas for supplemental workouts for your abs.

Abdominal Leg Lifts: Begin lying on exercise mat or carpeted area,

with legs together, knees slightly bent (throughout entire exercise). Lift legs to 90-degree angle. Hold. Gently let legs back down to start, but do NOT come in contact with floor. For more back support, place hands under your buttocks.

Hanging Leg Lifts: With legs straight down, hang (with gloves if preferred for firmer grip) from a horizontal bar with hands part a little more than shoulder-width. Lift legs up slow and steady to chest, bending hips and knees. Hold. Lower to starting position. For change in routine, twist hips to either side, touching your obliques or side abdominal muscles.

Ball Crunches: Balance your back on an exercise ball (or wheeled ottoman), feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart. Hands behind your head, but no pulling. With back and head straight, do crunches, pulling together abdominal muscles and lifting your shoulders several inches. Hold crunch at top. Return to start, slow and steady.

Ball Side Overs: Lying sideways over exercise ball (or wheeled ottoman), balance with feet reaching floor. With hands behind head and not pulling, and with head, neck and body straight, raise upper body slow and steady – as high as you can. Hold. Lower down to below starting position, bending with ball's help. Stop. Return back to beginning position. Switch sides and repeat.

Kneeling Crunches: with toning bar or rope (with pull-down machine),

kneel towards machine with cable angled away from the rack while you crunch down. Pull bar or rope down to just above forehead. Crunch down, slow and steady while exhaling and maintaining same position for rope or bar. Hold. Return to start position with abs doing return.

TONING TIPS: LOWER AREAS: BUTTOCKS, HIPS, LEGS (THIGHS, CALVES)

Time to hit the lower areas now; the rear pelvic region or two rounded areas on the torso (behind) that are posterior to the hips and formed by the gluteal muscles and other supporting tissues, organs, structures. Beginning with the buttocks, this series of toning exercises will also help your legs.

Squats with Weights – While holding one of your weights in each hand (beginners can do this without weights) and arms down to your sides (hands turned so that palms face each other), stand straight with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees a little bent. Then squat down while inhaling. Stop if you can no longer see your toes, you don't want to pass this point. Then rise back up, pushing with your heels to your original position while exhaling. Repeat about 20 times taking care to use good form. Don't want to over do it and hurt your knees!

Reverse Kicks – Get on your hands and knees on a carpeted area or exercise mat. Balance your body weight on your right leg and both arms, while exhaling and lifting your left leg, bent a little at the knee.

Kick up towards the ceiling with your left leg. Return gradually to beginning position while inhaling. Repeat slowly approximately 25 times. Switch legs and do 25 with the other.

Lunges - While holding one of your weights in each hand (beginners can do this without weights) and arms down to your sides (hands turned so that palms face each other), stand straight with your feet together, knees a little bent, head up. Move the right leg out a step while inhaling, lowering the left so that your knee just about touches the floor. Return to original position while exhaling, shoving off with your right foot. Repeat, alternating legs. Repeat set about 20 times.

Leg Sets - Here is a series of exercises for all levels of toning. Pace yourself, mix-n-match, and don't overdo it.

Chair Squats - With your feet shoulder-width apart and knees bent a little, stand in front of a chair and inhale while sitting in the chair. Return to beginning position, pushing off with your feet while exhaling. Don't lock knees when standing. Repeat 12 times. For more intensity, use hand weights.

Weighted Squats - With your feet shoulder-width apart and knees bent a little, stand straight with a weight in each hand, arms at your sides, palms facing each other. Proceed like you do with Chair Squats, only without the chair. For intensity change, add hand weights.

Supplemental Help for Buttocks

To help with additional buttocks toning, here are some extra exercises to mix in with your regular routine.

- Squat-Squeezes: With your feet hip-wide apart while standing in front of a chair, ready to be seated, very slowly lower yourself into a squatting position until you barely touch the seat. Hold. Rise while squeezing your buns together. Repeat.
- Moderated Lunges: With one leg behind you, knee of the opposite leg bent, lunge forward slow and steady, touching to "feel" the pull.
- Leg Swings: Stand straight and tall. Move one leg out to the right, then in. Repeat using gentle swinging motion a dozen time, pulling the buttock area. Repeat using other leg.
- Variations: Go walking, jogging, running, biking, hiking, kickboxing. Try martial arts and yoga. All are great rear end toners.

Moderations / reps: To increase toning efforts, add hand weights with any of the routines above.

Supplemental Help for Hips

Here are additional exercises to do for hip toning:

- Kickback Stand: Holding the back of a chair or table for balance, stand with your feet together. With rotation coming from your hip

joint, rotate your right foot to the right. Exhale. Slow and steady now, with the right foot outward, use your hip to kick back the right leg behind you. Bring leg back to start with inhaling. Repeat.

- Rear Lifts: On a mat or carpeted area, lie on your stomach, head straight off to one side with hands as pillow. Inhale while slowly lifting right leg. Hold at the top position. Exhale while lowering leg to start position. Repeat with left leg. Repeat set.
- Side Lifts: On a mat or carpeted area, lie on left side, legs and head straight, head resting on arm is fine. Exhale while gently lifting right leg high from hip joint. Hold. Inhale while lowering leg to start position. Repeat. Repeat with other side, other leg. Repeat set.

Supplemental Help for Legs (Thighs, Calves)

And here are additional workout ideas for toning the legs:

Outer thigh leg raises: On a mat or carpeted area, lie on your right side. With your legs stacked atop each other, positioned at a right angle to your body, support yourself with your left hand on the floor in front of your chest. Square your hips and lift your left leg up until you feel the muscle contract. Hold. Slow and steady, return to start position. Repeat. Switch sides and legs. Variations: add light ankle weights – approximately two pounds to legs. And at a fitness center, work this muscle group on the abductor machine.

Inner thigh leg raises: On a mat or carpeted area, lie on your right side, body straight. Rest your head atop your right arm, flat on the floor. With your right leg straight, gently move your left leg over, placing your left foot in front of your right leg, on the floor. Hold your left ankle. Slowly lift your right leg slightly above the floor. Hold.

Return to start position. Switch sides, legs. Repeat. Repeat set.

Variations: add light ankle weights – approximately two pounds to legs. And at a fitness center, work this muscle group on the abductor machine.

Hamstrings and Quads Lunges: With your feet together, standing, place your right foot forward, making a little larger step than average. Bend your right knee, lowering yourself towards the mat. But don't let your left knee touch the mat. Hold – while your left thigh is lined straight with your back. Pushing backwards off your right leg, return to start. Switch legs and repeat. Repeat set. Variations: add light weights – approximately two pounds to hands. If you're in the gym, work this muscle group on the leg curl and leg extension machines.

Hamstrings and Quads Squats: With legs shoulder-width apart (or wider), stand with your feet parallel. Fold your arms in front of you. Inhale while gently seating yourself "almost" in a fake chair. Keep knees in line with toes. Head up. Back straight. Exhale, while standing upright again. Straighten up, but do not lock your knees. Repeat.

Variations: Hold light hand weights, resting hands with weights on your hips. If you're in the gym, work this muscle group on the leg press machine.

Glute and Hamstring Crunches: On a mat or carpeted area, begin with all fours on the floor. Bring your forearms and palms so that they reach the floor. Gently reach straight out behind you with your right. Then bend the leg so that your right thigh is parallel to the mat, with the sole of your right foot facing upwards, angled behind you. Rising from the hamstring, gently press your right foot upwards, then slowly lower to start position. Do not arch your back during this exercise.

Variations: add light ankle weights. If you're in the gym, work this muscle group on the glute machine.

BODY SCULPTING TOOLS: YOGA, EQUIPMENT, VIDEOS & MORE

Fitness aids and fads, there are many products available for toning aids. Let's check out some top ones to add to your toning toolbox.

Toning Exercises with a Ball - Several programs on the market today use an exercise ball for toning work. Some are referred to as the gym ball, Swiss ball, Fitball and the stability ball. These work great particularly for the abdominal muscles and lower back. Basically, you lie on the ball front wards with your hips going downwards, and stretching / roll slowly around. Add crunches and leg-lifts with this ball; they are noted as one of the fastest means of improvement for

the entire midsection. The ball actually helps you use just about every muscle in the upper and lower abs. Note: substitute an ottoman on wheels or other similar home device for the ball!

Toning Bands – Available in about every color under the sun, you can coordinate workout activities with these bands. Varying in resistance and size, some are singular and some interlock. Most have foam handles.

Suzanne Somers Toning System – Who can forget Ms. Somers' Thighmaster?! Designed for fast and effective muscle toning, this system features portable, flexible looped and padded rods create resistance as you tone 12 areas of your body, including your back, arms, abs, hips, thighs and buttocks. Her kit also comes with a 10-minute video and an instructional booklet with 12 exercises.

Body Bars & Toning Bar Stand – Just like the ones used in fitness centers, these covered bars are available for strength training. They are used not only for sports conditioning but also for cross training and circuit training, and come in various weight increments. Stand hold around 30 bars and help keep them and your workout area organized.

Toner Belts – Toner belts help threefold; they improve abdominal muscle tone, strengthen abdominal muscles and help develop a firmer abdomen.

Toning Tables – New and used tables are available for a variety of

functions. Among choices are Sandbag Tables, Sit-up Tables, Stretch Tables, Leg Tables, 3 in 1 tables and Circulation Tables, and some come with sandbags and pillows. Toning tables are touted as offering a quick, effective, safe means to non-exercise, if that's a legitimate term. Supposedly after only one hour on the toning table, you will have completed: up to around a 2 mile walk, 1,000 hip rolls, 900 back kicks or 90 step-ups. In other words, they say that by using a toning table 2 times a week for around an average 50-minute treatment program, you would be getting an equivalent of about 2 hours of floor exercise every day. A recommended 10-minute maximum per use table is compared to 800-1000 reps, with high rep movement offering increasing resistance that increases blood and oxygen going to muscles. The toning tables are said to increase circulation, trim body without building bulk, enhance skin tone and improve flexibility while eliminating excess body fluids.

Here is a brief overview of some of the tables. The Sit up Table helps strengthen and tighten midriff, waist, lower back and abdomen muscles while also reducing inches in these areas, resulting in overall increased flexibility. The Stretch Table features a single pad that moves back and forth, firming & toning upper arms, stomach and back muscles. Results are improved posture and improved flexibility, due to the stretching of muscles and tendons. The Sandbag Table features

two pads that move in a rhythmic motion, strengthening muscles while firming and lifting flab in the buttocks and thigh area. The Leg Table boasts slenderizing the entire leg area, firming while toning the inner thigh area, reducing "saddle bag" outer thighs. The 3 in 1 Table lifts and lowers your legs with a waist-twisting motion, slimming the waist, hips and stomach while strengthening muscles in your lower back. And the Circulation Table increases blood circulation to surface skin cells, eliminates excess water retention and leaves the body relaxed and energized. Overall benefits of toning tables reported by users include increased range of motion, firmer & increased toning, strengthened muscles, improved posture and flexibility, especially with arthritic stiff joints.

Toning Lotions – There are all kinds of toning solutions out on the market. Some are made with gentle formulas for toning the face, like from Estee Lauder and Avon skin care lines where they firm the skin and tighten pores. Others claim fame to cellulite toning lotions with or without liposomes to get rid of that "cottage cheese" look. Check around, read labels and see about trying product samples before committing to a lot of money beforehand. Ask friends and fitness trainers what works and what doesn't.

There are dozens and dozens of assorted toning videos, DVDs, CDs, cassettes, books and ebooks to choose from, too. Check around

with fitness friends and trainers for their recommendations. And check with popular fitness magazines and websites to read their product reviews. Here are a few websites to start off your search:

www.fitnessinfomercialreview.com and

www.consumersearch.com/www/health_and_fitness and

<http://www.exercisevideosreviews.com/tonetotal2.html> .

POPULAR SHAPING PROGRAMS (Circuit Training)

Let's take a look at some popular programs to help with your toning. One popular among many including the navy, army, sports participants and other athletes at health and fitness centers, is circuit training, a high-energy aerobic workout that's combined with weight resistance training and equipment (not necessarily gym equipment; can be done at home). What circuit training actually is seems to vary, depending upon the trainer or fitness program. Many features appear in descriptions like:

- The training session needs to focus on approximately 12 strength and aerobic/anaerobic exercises or stations (recommended numbers ranged from 9 – 12).
- The training focuses on activities that are twofold: those that build strength and muscle tone, and those that burn fat and improve endurance.
- The training needs to include high repetitions with lighter weights

for ease on joints and tendons.

- Each exercise should be done only once, then move on.
- There should be very little, if any, rest between exercises or stations (some fitness gurus recommend 30-seconds maximum rest time between stations).
- What works best is to cross-train or NOT focus only on one single circuit or one type of training only. Instead, alternate your training stations with different exercise activities that focus on different parts of the body or fitness groups on alternate days or every other day.
- Combine your program with about 3 quarts of water and 4 or 5 small meals each day to help with your overall weight goals.

One overall blanket statement seems to sum up circuit training well: the basic ideology behind circuit training is to steadily advance from one exercise or workout station to the next, in order, until you finish doing all of the exercises or stations in your workout. Other than that, your choice of exercises or stations, selection of weights, number of repetitions and sets with rest (if any) in between – all of that is up to your own individualized training program and goals.

Circuit training offers many benefits. Here are some of the main ones:

- It's a complete program that incorporates toning, getting and staying in shape, and improving your overall fitness and health.

- It's great for fatigue management, resulting in increased work performance during a set time period.
- It's great for indoor and / or outdoor training. Budget not required.
- It's a program with variety of fitness activities, so you're not stuck with the same old "boring" workout routine.
- It's the best way to get a team, group or family in shape.
- It's noted as one of the top methods used for improving strength endurance; for example, trainees are only allowed to move up to the next level of the training program when they meet their program's requirements.
- It's a cost-effective program.
- It's an efficient program, allowing R&R (rest and relaxation) between alternating days of exercises and your body's fitness areas between workouts.
- It's a program that helps your body's aerobic conditioning and strength building while also burning fat at the same time.

Now we'll quickly cover the basic steps in a circuit-training program. And then cover recommended workout stations or exercises for the different muscle groups.

Basic Steps in Circuit Training Program:

1. Consult with your healthcare provider first, like with any and all

fitness programs, to make sure your exercise choices are fit for you.

2. Do basic stretches and warm up activities, especially for the muscle groups you'll be focusing on that day. Some of the popular recommended activities for this can be jogging, brisk walking and several minutes of low intensity, aerobic exercises like biking with low resistance. And stretch all muscle groups.
3. Proceed with your set of exercises or workout stations for about 20 minutes, focusing on a certain muscle group for the day. Log what you're doing so that you can alternate your program to focus of different muscle groups the next time and increase repetitions and / or weights as needed, and so that you can skip a day in between (maybe do cardio work on days in between).
4. At the end of your training sessions, cool off and do as you did with your warm up activities. Light aerobics and stretching will help get your heart rate back to normal.
5. Monitor your progress and set goals for yourself. For example, work with a trainer short-term or long-term at or near your fitness facilities or home. And establish goals for yourself. They can most likely help you with any testing needs, like to determine your body mass index, and establish some guidelines.

Now for the recommended workout stations or exercises for the different muscle groups. Adapt those you like to suit your environment and needs.

Group I- Indoor/Outdoor Set for Going In & Out of Cold Weather:

- Do the maximum amount of **pushups** that you can do in 1 minute.
- Then the same with **squats** for a minute. For more intensity do squats with weights –While holding a weight in each hand (beginners can do without) and arms at your sides (hands turned so that palms face each other), stand straight, feet shoulder-width apart, knees a little bent. Squat down while inhaling. Stop if you can no longer see your toes, you don't want to pass this point. Then rise back up while exhaling, pushing with your heels to your original position. Take care to use good posture and not hurt knees.
- Next do as many **pulls ups** as you can in a minute. Indoors, you could try using a bar (like in a closet for close hangers) or set up a "chinning" or "chin up" bar in a basement or workbench area. Some home equipment have this feature, too. And you can try curling and uncurling legs behind you and using assists for knees and pulling with hands / arms.
- Next **jog** or use a **stationary bike** for 3 minutes.
- Next come **lunges** for 1 minute, as many as you can do. - While

holding a weight in each hand (beginners can do without) and arms at sides (hands turned so that palms face each other), stand straight with feet together, knees a little bent, head up. Inhaling, move the right leg out a step, lowering the left so that your knee just about touches the floor. Then exhale while returning to original position, shoving off with your right foot. Repeat, alternating legs.

- Next come **curls** (biceps) for a minute. Stand or sit with your back straight and supported. With your arms down at sides, hold weights with palms facing out or up. Gently curl arms up towards shoulders. Uncurl. Repeat.
- Time to **jog** or use a **stationary bike** again for another 3 minutes.
- Next repeat the **squats** and **lunges** again for 1 minute each, unless you have access to equipment for leg work.
- And finish up with **crunches** and **sit-ups**, 2 minutes each, as many as you can do. For crunches, begin with bent knees (a little), feet flat on the floor, lying on your back with arms wrapped together across your chest. Then (1) exhale while raising your head, shoulders and chest off the floor, tightening your stomach muscles as you bend forward towards your hips, pause... (2) inhale while gently and slowly returning ALMOST to the original position, keeping your head just off the floor. Repeat. For intermediary or

advanced workouts, place your hands behind or beside your head (and don't pull it), place hands straight out over your head or pause for a couple seconds before inhaling for a more intense workout. For sit-ups, bend knees or not. It's up to your workout and goals.

Group II – Circuit Training at Home (or Gym)

With the group below, work each exercise for about 1 minute each with little to no rest in between. After completing all, rest for a few minutes, then repeat entire group two more times, resting after each completion cycle.

- Jump in place, arms reaching upwards
- Climb and down Stairs
- Jump rope
- Do lunges
- Do push-ups
- Do crunches
- Touch toes
- Bike ride (stationary or lie on back with legs in air and pedal imaginary bike).

Besides circuit training, there are other popular programs out there to help with your toning goals. Many reach out with real-world and

Internet aids. Here are some of the popular ones, listed in no particular order:

Denise Austin – Ms. Austin, a gymnast since age 12, and holder of a degree in Exercise Physiology, works out for just 30 minutes each day, eats meals regularly, and maintains her 5-feet 4-inch 120-lb build.

Nicknamed by some as "America's favorite fitness expert," she teaches aerobics classes on local television in California, has over 40 fitness books, DVDs and videos (she's in the Video Hall of Fame) published, sells her own line of workout equipment, bodywear by Danskin and a signature shoe, and conducts online training. Some of her book titles are, *Shrink Your Female Fat Zones* and *Body Work by Denise Austin*.

Ms. Austin was even appointed by President Bush to serve as a member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS). Get help for your toning from her by starting with a visit to www.deniseaustin.com . No postal address or phone number available.

Bob Greene - BFA, MFA, Professional Exercise Physiologist and Personal trainer for Oprah Winfrey helps people with multidimensional solutions, too. He offers online training with great toning workouts and tips through eDiets.com, a health, fitness and nutrition site boasting more than one million members since their beginning in 1997, top Nielsen//NetRatings rankings, being named "Best of the Web" award by Forbes in the diet and nutrition category, and "Editors' Choice" by

PC Magazine. Mr. Greene leads a virtual 12-week fitness program that focuses on functional, cardiovascular and strength exercises, featuring information about eliminating emotional eating behavior. His program can be done in the home with levels for all from beginnings on up and is self-paced. (More info at <http://ediets.com> and below).

Raphael Calzadilla – Mr. Calzadilla, the 2001 Mr. Connecticut and Fitness Expert - BA,ACE, also offers online training through eDiets.com. He helps members reach their individualized fitness goals with unique fitness plans tailored one-on-one, working with only the equipment you have available at home or at a fitness center. His virtual training includes a customized workout plan that you can alter in a click or two; for example, if you want to adjust your exercise routine when you go out of town and stay in a hotel with different workout equipment. There are also weekly schedules, an online log / tracking journal, 3D animated exercises to help you understand the exercises better and support 24/7 via toll-free phone calls, forum and email help.

Learn more about the training and toning programs available at eDiets by contacting them at:

eDiets.com
3801 W. Hillsboro Blvd.
Deerfield Beach, Florida 33442
Toll-Free: (800) 265-6170
Local: (954) 360-9022
Fax: (800) 804-3595

BeachBody.com – Beachbody is the creator of popular in-home fitness and weight loss solutions. They were founded in 1998 by Product Partners, LLC, of Los Angeles. And their product line features Slim in 6®, Power 90®, P90X™, Yoga Booty Ballet™, Fast 10™, Slim Series™, and Power Half Hour™, and others. Their programs combine video-based fitness programs for easy home viewing with their own line of fitness accessories like dumbbells and resistance bands for your toning work, plus dietary guidelines, nutritional supplements and online support. They air some of their products on television infomercials and have a huge following. For example, their Beachbody Support Team, a group of over 15,000 diehard Beachbody customers, volunteer their time and energy to guide new people through the program. Some 250 of these volunteers also help coach, lead chats, message board forums and virtual workouts. Their own fitness experts, celebrities, and company managers also host weekly chats. For more information, their number is 1-800-454-2639.

Men's Health Magazine – Their website offers online training at <http://www.menshealth.com> . Their virtual trainer offers interactive software, customized workouts adapted to your schedule and available equipment, animated exercise demonstrations, anytime access 24 / 7 and special programs. For more information, you can call toll-free (800)666-2303.

Self Magazine – Their website also offer personal training and toning aids. Online at <http://www.self.com/fitness/workouts> you can click on their online workout slide shows and view their various online workouts with special sections focusing on cardio, flexibility, strength and toning.

Prevention Magazine – Their website offers training and toning information at <http://www.prevention.com> . They also offer handy online tools like a Walking Calculator that measures how many calories you burned walking at various speeds, hiking or backpacking, and their online Physical EQ Test that measures your stamina. There is also a BMI (Body Mass Index) Calculator that measures body fat based on height and weight for both genders, a Condition Finder where you click on whatever health conditions you may have for help, Healing with Vitamins, an Herb Finder, Recipe Finder, Self-Care Basics and more. Their phone number for more information is 610-967-8527.

TONING TIPS

Here are some toning tips for your fitness toolbox in no particular order. Mix-n-match. Read one a day. Have fun!

Tummy Toner – In addition to your toning workout, eat smaller portions. Your stomach is only about as large as your fist. So no need to stuff yourself with a large plate full of food.

Try a Trainer – Get advice or help from a trainer from time to time.

Some online trainers are pretty affordable like around \$2 week at eDiets.com. Or search your favorite online engine for free fitness forums and chat away.

Posture Practice – Practice improving your posture daily, no matter whether you are sitting at your work desk, sitting at home in the family room or at the table, or standing and walking.

Variety – Vary your toning routine during the week. Alternate days that you do cardio work on days when you don't do your toning work.

Routine - Also vary your routine. Research shows that a body can adapt to the same routine over a 4- to 6-week time frame. When you vary the routine, the body works harder, trying to adapt once again. At least increase the intensity or amount of sets you do. But "change" something.

Warm Up – Don't forget to warm up with some stretches before diving into your toning exercises in both cardio and strength training. You only need about 5 to 8 minutes. And target the muscle groups that you'll be using.

What is "WARM-UP" –A warm-up period helps your body by passing along lots of blood, full of nutrients, to areas that are about to be exercised, resulting in the warming up of the muscles and the lubrication of the joints. No matter whether you are working out at home, in a fitness center or outdoors, regardless of weather, you need

to warm up before beginning all exercise activities in order to prepare your body for your workout. So improve your performance and reduce your risk of injury with a warm-up period.

What is "COOL-DOWN" – The period of 5 to 10 minutes at the end of your workout is the cool-down period. It allows time to lower your heart rate before you dash back off to work or other activities after your workout sessions, and reduces your risk of muscle soreness and injury that could come from your workout. This cool-down period should include 5 minutes of cardio exercise like stationary biking or walking, and should proceed at a reduced pace from your previous exercise activities. At the end, you should focus on about 5 minutes of slow, focused stretching, when your breathing goes back to where it was before your workout.

Get a Grip – When using weights, hold them firmly yet comfortably, not tight, raising your blood pressure in the process.

Un-Lock – Remember not to lock your knees or your elbows while working out. Don't place undo stress on them.

Turtle Moves – Remember who won Aesop's famous race and go slow and steady, especially with any equipment and machines you are using. For example, avoid having machine weights slam back into position at all times.

Focus –From Aesop to the old Kung-Fu movie, here's a tip: focus on

the muscle group you are working on during your workout, Grasshopper. Look at a wall if necessary, to maintain your concentration and proceed slow and steady.

Journal – Keep a diary, journal or some type of record of your progress. Note which exercises you're using for which muscle groups, the number of repetitions and intensity. Track your diet here, too, if you'd like. Then set goals for yourself and update them regularly.

Attention – Stand up straight! Chest out and up. Shoulders back. Keep good posture.

Breath – At first it's difficult to monitor everything. But once you learn your routines, remember to exhale when lifting. Inhale when returning back to the beginning position.

R&R – Don't forget that "All work and no play..." saying. Rest and relax. Work different muscle groups on alternate days.

NO Hiding! – Psst - Some of the most difficult-to-shed fat is hiding under your belly button. Even though you may have strong abs, no one will see them if the overlying tissue is fat. Ugh! Time to hit the crunches and leg raises.

In conclusion, to get the toned body you desire, you need a regularly scheduled combination program of aerobic exercises, strength training, and good, healthy eating habits. A good place to begin is with your healthcare provider for the latest information about

a well-balanced dietary and exercise plan to begin your strategic toning today.