

best exercises for abs

The Ultimate Guide to the Best Exercises for Abs

best exercises for abs are crucial for building a strong core, improving posture, and enhancing athletic performance. Whether you're a seasoned athlete or just beginning your fitness journey, understanding how to effectively target your abdominal muscles is key to achieving a sculpted physique and a healthier body. This comprehensive guide delves into the most effective ab exercises, covering everything from foundational movements to advanced techniques, ensuring you have the knowledge to sculpt a powerful and defined core. We will explore compound movements that engage your abs indirectly, as well as isolation exercises designed to directly challenge and strengthen your rectus abdominis, obliques, and transverse abdominis. Get ready to unlock your core's full potential with our in-depth breakdown of the best ab workouts available.

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Understanding Your Core Muscles

The core is far more than just the visible "six-pack" muscles. It encompasses a complex network of muscles that wrap around your torso, providing stability, supporting your spine, and facilitating movement. Understanding these muscle groups is fundamental to selecting the best exercises for abs and ensuring a balanced and functional core. The primary muscles include the rectus abdominis (the

outermost layer, responsible for the "six-pack" look), the internal and external obliques (located on the sides, crucial for rotation and side bending), and the transverse abdominis (the deepest abdominal muscle, acting like a natural corset to stabilize the spine and pelvis). A strong core is essential for everyday activities, preventing injuries, and improving athletic capabilities across various sports.

Developing all these muscle groups is vital for overall core strength and a toned midsection. Focusing solely on one area can lead to imbalances and limit your potential for improvement. Therefore, a well-rounded ab workout routine incorporates exercises that challenge these muscles in different ways, promoting functional strength and aesthetic development. This holistic approach ensures your core is not only visually appealing but also robust and efficient.

Compound Exercises for a Stronger Core

While dedicated ab exercises are important, compound movements are incredibly effective for building a strong core by engaging multiple muscle groups simultaneously. These exercises challenge your abdominal muscles to stabilize your body and resist movement, leading to functional strength gains. Incorporating these into your routine can significantly contribute to your overall progress in achieving your fitness goals. They offer a more efficient way to train, maximizing your time and effort.

Squats

Squats, especially barbell squats, are a powerhouse compound exercise. As you descend and ascend, your core must work intensely to maintain an upright posture and stabilize your spine against the load. This isometric contraction is excellent for building deep core strength. The engagement of your transverse abdominis is particularly notable as it braces to protect your spine during the movement.

Deadlifts

Deadlifts demand an immense amount of core engagement. To safely lift the weight from the floor, your entire torso, including your abdominal muscles, must tense to create a rigid unit. This exercise is unparalleled for building overall strength and resilience in the core, making it an indispensable part of any comprehensive strength training program. The brace created by your core is critical for preventing spinal flexion.

Overhead Presses

Lifting weight overhead requires significant core stability. Your abs and obliques work to prevent your torso from arching or extending excessively. This exercise challenges your core's ability to maintain an anterior pelvic tilt and keep your spine neutral under load. It's a fantastic way to build a strong, stable shoulder girdle along with a resilient core.

Push-ups

The standard push-up is an excellent bodyweight exercise that strongly engages the rectus abdominis and transverse abdominis to maintain a straight line from head to heels. As you lower and push your body, your core acts as a stabilizer, preventing your hips from sagging or rising too high. Variations like decline push-ups or weighted push-ups can further increase the challenge.

Targeting the Rectus Abdominis

The rectus abdominis, often referred to as the "six-pack," is primarily responsible for spinal flexion – the act of bringing your chest towards your pelvis. Exercises that mimic this movement are most effective for targeting these superficial abdominal muscles. Developing the rectus abdominis contributes significantly to a toned and defined midsection. It's important to perform these exercises with proper form to maximize muscle activation and avoid strain.

Crunches

Crunches are a classic ab exercise. Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Lift your shoulders off the ground, focusing on contracting your rectus abdominis. Avoid pulling on your neck. The movement should be controlled, emphasizing the squeeze at the top of the contraction. Variations like bicycle crunches add an oblique component.

Leg Raises

Leg raises effectively target the lower portion of the rectus abdominis. Lie on your back and lift your legs towards the ceiling, keeping them as straight as possible. Lower them slowly without letting them touch the floor. To increase difficulty, perform them hanging from a pull-up bar, which adds the challenge of preventing momentum and stabilizing your body.

Sit-ups

While similar to crunches, sit-ups involve a larger range of motion, bringing your entire torso up from the floor. This engages the rectus abdominis more extensively. To perform correctly, anchor your feet and control the movement, focusing on squeezing your abs throughout the entire motion. Avoid using momentum to complete the repetition.

Engaging Your Obliques

The obliques are essential for rotational movements, side bending, and providing lateral stability to your core. Strengthening them not only contributes to a V-taper physique but also significantly improves functional strength and reduces the risk of back injuries. These muscles are crucial for athletic movements and everyday tasks involving twisting or bending.

Russian Twists

Sit on the floor with your knees bent and feet slightly lifted off the ground (for added difficulty). Lean your torso back slightly, maintaining a straight spine. Twist your torso from side to side, touching your hands (or a weight) to the floor on each side. This movement directly targets the external and internal obliques.

Side Planks

The side plank is a powerful isometric exercise for the obliques. Lie on your side, propped up on your forearm, with your body in a straight line from head to heels. Engage your obliques to lift your hips off the floor and maintain the position. Hold for time, focusing on keeping your body stable and avoiding hip sag. This exercise is excellent for building endurance in the obliques.

Bicycle Crunches

This dynamic exercise combines elements of crunches and rotational movement. Lie on your back with your hands behind your head. Bring your opposite elbow towards your opposite knee, mimicking a pedaling motion. Alternate sides with each crunch, ensuring a controlled twist and contraction of the obliques. This exercise is highly effective for hitting both the rectus abdominis and obliques.

Strengthening the Transverse Abdominis

The transverse abdominis is the deepest layer of your abdominal muscles, acting as a natural corset to stabilize your spine and pelvis. A strong transverse abdominis is crucial for preventing lower back pain, improving posture, and enhancing overall core stability. Exercises that focus on drawing your navel towards your spine are most effective for activating this muscle.

Plank

The classic plank is an excellent exercise for the entire core, with a significant emphasis on the transverse abdominis. Support yourself on your forearms and toes, keeping your body in a straight line from head to heels. Engage your core by drawing your navel towards your spine, creating tension throughout your midsection. Hold this position for as long as you can maintain proper form.

Bird-Dog

This exercise improves core stability and coordination. Start on your hands and knees. Simultaneously extend one arm straight forward and the opposite leg straight back, keeping your core engaged and your hips and shoulders level. Avoid arching your back or letting your hips sag. Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side. This movement challenges your transverse abdominis to stabilize your torso.

Dead Bug

Lie on your back with your knees bent at a 90-degree angle and your arms extended towards the ceiling. Keeping your lower back pressed into the floor, slowly lower one arm back overhead and the opposite leg towards the floor. Return to the starting position and repeat with the opposite arm and leg. The key is to maintain core engagement and prevent your lower back from arching.

Advanced Abdominal Exercises

Once you have built a solid foundation, you can incorporate more challenging exercises to further stimulate muscle growth and improve strength. These advanced movements require greater control, balance, and strength, pushing your abdominal muscles to new limits. Progression is key to continued gains in core development.

Hanging Leg Raises (with knee tucks or straight leg raises)

As mentioned earlier, hanging leg raises are a progression from floor-based leg raises. For an advanced variation, aim for straight leg raises, lifting your legs without bending your knees. Another challenging option is the knee-to-chest tuck, where you bring your knees up towards your chest while hanging, requiring significant lower abdominal and hip flexor strength.

Ab Wheel Rollouts

This exercise is extremely demanding on the entire core, especially the rectus abdominis and transverse abdominis. Kneel on the floor and grip an ab wheel with both hands. Roll the wheel forward, extending your body as far as you can while maintaining a tight core and preventing your back from arching. Then, engage your abs to pull the wheel back to the starting position. It's crucial to have a strong foundation before attempting this exercise.

Toes-to-Bar

This challenging exercise, typically performed on a pull-up bar, requires significant abdominal strength and coordination. From a hanging position, lift your legs and feet until they touch the bar. The movement requires a strong contraction of the rectus abdominis and hip flexors, while the transverse abdominis works to stabilize the torso and prevent swinging. This exercise is a true test of core power and control.

Frequency and Progression for Ab Training

The frequency of your ab training should align with your overall fitness goals and recovery capabilities. Most individuals can effectively train their abs 2-4 times per week. It's important to remember that abs, like any other muscle group, need time to recover and repair. Overtraining can

hinder progress and increase the risk of injury.

Progression is crucial for continued gains. As exercises become easier, you should aim to increase the challenge. This can be achieved by:

- Increasing the number of repetitions or sets.
- Adding resistance, such as holding weights during exercises like Russian twists or crunches.
- Decreasing rest periods between sets.
- Progressing to more difficult variations of exercises (e.g., from crunches to hanging leg raises).
- Increasing the duration for isometric exercises like planks and side planks.

Listen to your body and adjust your training as needed. Consistent effort and intelligent progression are key to unlocking your core's full potential.

Nutrition for Visible Abs

While consistent training is essential for building strong abdominal muscles, achieving visible abs is heavily dependent on body fat percentage. Even the most powerful ab exercises will not be apparent if they are covered by a layer of subcutaneous fat. Therefore, a clean and balanced diet plays a critical role in revealing your hard-earned core definition.

Focus on a diet rich in lean protein, complex carbohydrates, healthy fats, and plenty of fruits and vegetables. Adequate protein intake is crucial for muscle repair and growth, while complex carbs provide sustained energy for workouts. Healthy fats are important for hormone production and overall health. Reducing your intake of processed foods, sugary drinks, and excessive saturated fats will contribute significantly to lowering your body fat percentage. Hydration is also key, so ensure you drink plenty of water throughout the day. Combining a disciplined diet with a consistent and challenging ab workout routine is the most effective strategy for achieving a sculpted and strong core.

Remember, consistency in both your training and your nutrition is paramount. Building a strong and defined core is a journey that requires dedication and patience. By incorporating the best exercises for abs into your routine and prioritizing a healthy diet, you will be well on your way to achieving your fitness goals and enjoying the numerous benefits of a powerful core.

Ultimately, the "best" exercises for abs are those that you can perform consistently and effectively, challenging your muscles and allowing for progressive overload. Whether you focus on compound movements, isolation exercises, or a combination of both, the key is to engage your entire core musculature and commit to a balanced approach that includes proper form, consistent effort, and supportive nutrition. Your journey to a stronger, more defined core begins with understanding these principles and applying them diligently to your training regimen.

FAQ

Q: How often should I do ab exercises for the best results?

A: For most individuals, performing ab exercises 2-4 times per week is optimal. This allows for adequate muscle recovery and growth while still providing consistent stimulus for the abdominal muscles. Overtraining can be counterproductive, so listen to your body and adjust your frequency as needed.

Q: Can I get a six-pack without doing crunches?

A: Yes, absolutely. While crunches target the rectus abdominis, many other exercises effectively work this muscle. Compound movements like squats and deadlifts, as well as exercises like leg raises, hanging leg raises, and ab wheel rollouts, can also contribute significantly to developing a visible six-pack, especially when combined with a low body fat percentage through diet.

Q: How long does it take to see results from ab exercises?

A: The timeline for seeing results from ab exercises varies greatly depending on individual factors such as genetics, starting fitness level, diet, and consistency of training. For some, initial improvements in core strength may be noticeable within a few weeks, while visible abdominal definition (a "six-pack") typically requires consistent training and a reduction in body fat percentage, which can take anywhere from several weeks to several months.

Q: Are weighted ab exercises better than bodyweight exercises?

A: Weighted ab exercises can be more effective for building muscle mass and strength once bodyweight exercises become too easy. However, bodyweight exercises are excellent for building a foundational level of strength and mastering proper form. The "best" approach often involves a progression from bodyweight to weighted exercises as you get stronger, ensuring continuous challenge and adaptation.

Q: What is the most important muscle to train for core stability?

A: While all core muscles are important, the transverse abdominis is often considered the most critical for core stability. It acts like an internal corset, stabilizing the spine and pelvis, which is fundamental for preventing injuries and supporting efficient movement in all other exercises and daily activities. Exercises like planks, bird-dogs, and dead bugs are particularly effective for targeting this deep muscle.

Q: Can I target my lower abs specifically?

A: While the abdominal muscles work as a unit, exercises that involve lifting the legs towards the torso, such as leg raises and hanging leg raises, tend to emphasize the lower portion of the rectus abdominis more than exercises focused purely on spinal flexion. However, it's important to remember that you cannot isolate one part of the rectus abdominis from the rest.

Q: Is it possible to overtrain my abs?

A: Yes, it is possible to overtrain any muscle group, including the abs. Overtraining can lead to decreased performance, increased risk of injury, and fatigue. It's important to incorporate rest days into your routine and listen to your body's signals, such as persistent soreness or decreased motivation.

Q: Do I need to do cardio to get visible abs?

A: While cardio is not a direct ab exercise, it is crucial for reducing overall body fat, which is necessary for revealing abdominal muscles. A combination of a healthy diet and consistent cardiovascular exercise alongside targeted ab training is the most effective strategy for achieving visible abs.

Best Exercises For Abs

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well beyond old fashioned crunches and sit-up so you can have an extremely effective abs workout. Whether your belly is on the soft side or you're a high level athlete, you'll find a great variety of ab exercises that will target all four major groups of abdominal muscles, categorized by easy, moderate and challenging - so it is great for all levels of fitness. This book doesn't make extreme promises like getting ripped abs in 6 days, doesn't recommend crazy diets that you're dying to get off of in a week, and there isn't a lot of technical mumbo-jumbo! When you purchase this book you will get highly effective ab and stomach exercises that will help you strengthen, tone and get a flat belly - in a healthy way. Benefits of ab and stomach exercises: *Prevent / reduce back problems & pain *Get a slim, strong, sexy, belly. *Improve energy *Enhance athletic performance *Better posture *Improve digestion *Prevents hernias *And more! Chapters include: 50 of the best exercises for your abs with photos and clear instructions, discussion of the many benefits of core exercises, overview of anatomy and more! Get a FREE BONUS audio Yoga for a strong core workout when you order this book; a \$9.95 value. A download link is provided on the about the author page in the book. ABS! is written by yoga and fitness expert Howard VanEs, author of 5 yoga/fitness books including Ageless Beauty & Timeless Strength and Beginning Yoga: A Practice Manual.

best exercises for abs: Ab Exercises Ultimate Collection - The World's Best Abs Workout

Vincent Lucas, Kristina Daws, 2018-09-13 The World's Best Abs Workout Do you want six pack abs of steel? Do you want to be ripped? Do you want an amazing beach body? Then you need 'The World's Best Abs Workout' - the best and easiest program, designed to help you achieve those toned, tight stomach muscles you want. Follow Our Program and Your Results Are Guaranteed If you follow this program, you are guaranteed to achieve the six-pack you dream of! In almost no time! Inside this book, you will find a no-nonsense, straight-forward approach to achieving the abs and core strength you want. We explain simply and easily the only 15 stomach exercises you need, as well as including a comprehensive 8 week exercise program that will get you started as a beginner and take you right through to the advanced level, to when you are a tight and toned. Complete, Comprehensive Diagrams and Program Every exercise contains diagrams and simple to follow explanations to ensure you follow the correct form. The book also contains an introduction that includes information on the importance of core muscles, tips for motivation during an exercise regime, as well as simple, no-nonsense explanations on how to ensure your exercise leads to muscle growth. Get It Now What are you waiting for? If you want to guarantee that you achieve those abs you want, then get the best abs exercise book you can get! Get this book now!

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movements. The best abdominal routine design will also include a customized meal-plan/dietary-recommendations-plan that stresses high quality proteins, composite carbohydrates, and healthy fats that will greatly assist you in maintaining your intense training program. Simple Abdominal Exercises Your best abdominal routine will consist of exercises recommended by strength and fitness professionals because their experience with numerous people over many years has shown them what works and what doesn't. So according to the professionals, the best abdominal routine starts with (1) Swiss Ball Ab Crunches followed by (2) Inverse Crunches and then ending with (3) Ab Crunches. These are to be done in 3 sets of 12 - 15 reps. Crunches help tone your muscles - but someone who's overweight has to lose the weight before they can see their muscles. This is the challenge of sticking with a fat-loss diet. Even if you're not planning to go after 6 pack abs, strengthening your abdominal muscles is still important because strong abs reduce the risk of lower back injuries, help decrease low back pain if your back is already injured, and help to tone your whole torso. From a trainer's point of view, the most efficient and best abdominal routine consists of: (1) ab crunches that bend the upper abdominal muscles and serve as the base for the whole workout, (2) inverse crunches that tone the lower abs, and (3) side folds that work on exercising the sidelong oblique muscles. Also, the American Council on Exercise declared Bicycle Crunches to be among the best abdominal exercises because it uses every muscle in the abs to develop a well-built torso. Exercising, eating well, and developing 6 pack abs is no mean deed. Uncovering those 6 pack abs needs constant checking of what, how much, and when one eats. Discipline and patience are definitely necessary. However, it must be repeated that even the best abdominal routine may not make the splashboard abs you're hoping to see if you have a slow metabolism. But there are ways to quicken your metabolism such as (1) healthy snacking between meals, (2) eating low glycemic index carbohydrates, (3) aerobic or cardio exercises, (4) drinking adequate water to stay perked up, (5) lifting weights, and (6) checking your food consumption. If you're able to strengthen your abdominal muscles, reduce your belly fat, and use a proven program that's already proven its effectiveness with others, your chances of developing those 6 pack abs is greatly increased. --- End of Excerpt ---

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entire body Call it a spare tire, muffin top, or paunch. Men and women consistently cite their belly as their biggest problem area-and it is often the toughest final pounds to lose. Not anymore! Whether readers' eating habits have been affected by stress, their bodies have changed with age, or they're constantly doing crunches without results, it's time to blast belly fat the right way. Using the comprehensive, week-by-week eating and exercise plan, readers can lose up to 20 pounds in 6 weeks-and keep it off, forever. The Men's Health Big Book: Getting Abs special features include: - Quick effective routines that replace boring, painful crunches - Manly (and healthy) recipes that take less than 15 minutes to prepare! - Hundreds of tips on how to emphasize muscle definition and six-pack abs! Including a step-by-step, 4-week eating and exercise plan, easy-to-prepare recipes, and hundreds of exercises, The Men's Health Big Book of Abs by Adam Bornstein and the editors of Men's Health is the ultimate guide to a leaner, fitter, sexier body.

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recipes. Color photos throughout.

best exercises for abs: The Big Book of Abs Muscle & Fitness,, 2013-08-01 In this guidebook to health, the editors of Muscle & Fitness magazine provide a five week plan as well as tips and strategies to get—and stay—motivated in obtaining well defined and toned abs. There are more than 70 workout routines presented with full-color photos to guide readers in the best possible way to achieve the goal of that tight “six-pack.” Throughout all the fitness routines there are informative tips and fast facts to make sure readers are performing the exercise in the safest and most effective manner. Additionally, to complete the workout program, instruction in nutrition to ensure one’s body is getting the proper mix of protein or carbohydrates just when it needs them is included.

best exercises for abs: Fastest ABS Workout Piotr Koczewski, 2019-07-24 “Fastest ABS Workout” is a revolutionary, previously unknown approach to body building. The exercises I show in this book will let you shape your abs to form a visible 6-pack, 8-pack or even 10-pack a lot faster than with traditional sit-ups, and a lot easier than with sophisticated gym workout plans. Based on over 10 years of experience with abdominal muscles training, having found no other guidebook to meet my expectations, I developed my own exercise system which – much to my surprise but also to great satisfaction – has let me reach results ten times more spectacular, causing quick fat burning with simultaneous muscle growth. I decided to share my experiences, observations, thoughts and tips with other people who want to get rid of their spare tires and get desirable abs sculpture, but who also – just like me – don't like and don't have the time to endlessly and thoughtlessly repeat boring exercises in the blind hope of finally getting “some” results “some” day. Unlike many other guidebooks regarding the same topic, my book focuses primarily on actions and results in order to minimize the time spent on reading and exercising while maximizing the effects of this effort. That's why I tried to include only the most important information, purposely omitting the majority of unnecessary scientific knowledge that other books often overwhelm their readers with. At the same time, I dispel a lot of popular myths and widely spread, yet incorrect or even harmful beliefs regarding abdominal muscles training. I strived to make my book as easy reading as possible – and to make picking up exercises and starting your training just as easy and fast. To achieve that, I used simple language that anyone can understand, minimizing the written content while boosting it with original images to properly demonstrate the exercises. My book all by itself is the best embodiment of its message: “Fastest ABS Workout” is slim and not too wordy, visually appealing, easy to read, and effective, bringing you unexpectedly impressive results in half the time – or even faster – than your previous exercises. What's more, it is the first book to give you great motivation while leaving you with a lot of free time aside of the exercises. For there is so much more important and pleasurable things to do every day – but it's so much better to do them being in good shape, good health and good mood thanks to regular and effective workout! One of the main problems – and the most frequent excuses – distracting you from starting any kind of physical workout, and making it hard to maintain your training routine once even started, is lack of time. I know first hand that it can constitute a serious drawback, because I found it difficult myself to allocate the time for regular workout. Because of this time management issue, I developed exercises for myself that focus on the duration of holding certain body position rather than on number of repeats. Thanks to this, I was able to shorten the workout time from dozens to just a couple of minutes every day while getting the same or even better results significantly faster. Did you know that you can exercise your abs while sitting on your couch and watching TV? Have you ever thought about effective abdominal exercises based on seconds and not the number of repetitions? Did you know that spending just a few minutes before bedtime is enough to maintain the abdominal muscle sculpture throughout the year? Have you ever thought about exercises that don't require any special instruments, just a stopwatch? Do you know how to start exercising individual muscle parts of the abdomen, starting from scratch? Do you know one exercise that lets you carve up three groups of abdominal muscles at the same time? Did you know that there is such a thing as 10-pack abs? Do you know that you can accelerate the hypertrophy of the abdominal muscles using only exercises, without taking any supplements? Have you ever checked the efficiency of your abdominal muscles by doing a stress test? Are you ready for

a training that lets you forget about outdated and boring diet tips, counting calories, avoiding fat, and keeping track of endless numbers of series and repetitions? Thanks to my exercises, you will be able to save time which can be used, for example, for pleasure. The book contains 42 exercises for all abdominal muscle parts, grouped into chapters. I invite you to read about new abs exercises that will change your belly.

best exercises for abs: The Ultimate Body Liz Neporent, 2007-12-18 Which exercises do the best job toning my thighs and legs? What routine will really help me lose weight once and for all? Why should I skip crunches if I'm trying to turn my beer belly into a six-pack? If you're looking for answers, just ask Lizzy. . . . As America's premier fitness guru, and the bestselling coauthor of *Buns of Steel* and *Weight Training for Dummies*, Liz Neporent has helped hundreds of satisfied individuals get in shape. Now she wants to help you! Easy-to-follow, results-oriented, and completely illustrated with photographs, *The Ultimate Body* is a dream come true for women looking to shed pounds, tone muscles, and feel the fittest they have ever felt in their lives. Inside you'll discover • Pre-workout prep: can-do motivational strategies, goal setting, and how to develop a workout schedule that is tailor-made for you • The Perfect Beginner Workout: If you're feeling out of shape, the "buff starts here"-with Modified Push-Ups, Partial Ab Rolls, and Pelvic Tilts • The Perfect Gym Workout: Lizzy takes you step-by-step through the most effective machine circuit at the gym-and takes away the intimidation • The Perfect Weight Loss Workout: Exercises that will help you lose body fat (and keep it off)-from jumping rope to Jumping Jacks • The Perfect Strength Workout: Muscle building and strength maximizing routines-and the secrets of the world's strongest athletes • The Perfect No Crunch Abdominal Workout: Attain a flat, toned tummy-with Ball Crunches, Hovers, and Mini Leg Lowers Plus-the Mind-Body Workout for calming the mind . . . the Travel Workout for keeping fit on the road . . . a Stretch Workout for improving flexibility and posture . . . the Perfect Legs and Butt Workout for tight buns and gorgeous gams . . . and the Perfect Upper-Body Workout for sculpting those muscles north of the waistline! Highlighted throughout with personal stories and anecdotes from fitness experts and people who successfully put into practice Lizzy's routines, this accessible guide makes feeling fit and looking great a snap-go sweat!

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