



the
perfect

workout for women

Whatever your body type be it pear-shaped, apple-shaped, or as lean as a runner bean, you'll find a workout plan tailored to your body shape, guaranteed to maximise results from the time you spend at the gym.

Using a combination of free weights, resistance machines and cardio sessions each plan helps you sculpt and shape your body and target problem areas. Special tips on calorie control and healthy eating make sure you end up feeling as good as you look.

Words: John Shepherd **Photography:** Ultra-Fit Images/Grant Pritchard

Perfect woman workout will:

- Help you to identify your body type
- Show you how to best train your body type
- Select the most effective resistance training exercises to achieve your perfect body
- Advise you how much cardio you need to do for your body type
- Provide an easy to follow 4-week workout plan you can use at your gym
- Advise you on how to control your calories to shape your perfect body

Train your body type

We're all born with a genetic body type. We might be pear-shaped, or leaner and straighter, for example. Although it is not possible to change our basic body type, with the right weight training and cardio work it is possible to change and balance our proportions.

The first step toward this is knowing what body type you are (see table 1 below).

Table 1 What's your body type?

Body shape	Jean size	Top size	Cup size
Pear	14 +	10-12	<B
Runner Bean	10	10	A/B
Apple	<12	<12	<C

When you know this you can then train it in a way that it will best respond.

Why resistance training works for women

You may not appreciate the benefits now, but you will after regular resistance training. Performing the 'right' exercises in

- **Lift your butt with single leg squats**
- **Shape sexy thighs with the inner and outer thigh machine**

Build muscle to burn fat

Muscle is metabolic dynamite, it's lean active tissue that burns calories just by

“Performing the 'right' exercises in the 'right' combination of sets and reps, for your body type will shape and define your body and make 'problem areas' a thing of the past”

the 'right' combination of sets and reps, for your body type (see workouts) will shape and define your body and make 'problem areas' a thing of the past.

- **Rid yourself of saggy upper arms with triceps dips**

being there (unlike fat, which is the complete opposite)! Every 0.45Kg increase results in an additional 35 calories being burned. So the leaner you are the less fat you'll be. And don't worry the perfect woman resistance workouts aren't designed to pack on muscle like a body builder, reps and sets are carefully designed to shape, lift and tone and compliment your body type.

Weight training and body weight exercises shape and tone muscles, and strengthen them.

These and more perfect woman shaping resistance exercises are described in the workout section.

PERFECT WOMAN WORKOUT EXERCISES

How to train your body type

Runner Bean

Thin types response to resistance training will be less in comparison to the other types. However, you could expect a 0.5Kg gain in muscle every month. Cardio work should be kept to a minimum (1-2 sessions a week) so as not to work against your resistance shaping efforts.

Pear/Apple

With much bigger frames your bodies will be stronger and quicker to gain muscle. However, as you are more likely to be carrying more body fat, you will need to do more cardio work. Do 3-5 sessions a week. This will increase your calorie burn, decrease your fat and reveal your resistance training efforts.

For every 0.45Kg increase in lean muscle, you'll burn an additional 350 calories per week, without you doing anything! That's equivalent to a 40 minute stepper workout.



“For every 0.45Kg increase in lean muscle, you'll burn an additional 350 calories per week, without you doing anything!”

Shoulders

Thin shoulders will make you look narrow and can accentuate your pear shape. Whilst rounded shoulders, often caused by being slumped over a computer all day, will reduce your stature and prematurely age you.

1 Dumbbell front raise and lateral lift combo

Targets all the major shoulder muscles. It will improve your upper body proportions, giving you more width, and improve your posture. Perform a front raise and then a lateral lift until you complete your reps.

Start position

Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Hold a dumbbell in each hand by your sides with your thumbs facing forwards. Keep your back in neutral, that's neither overly rounded nor arched, and look straight ahead

Action

Front raise:

- 1) Lift the dumbbells in front of your body to a position level with your shoulders
- 2) Lower slowly back to start position

Lateral lift:

- 1) Extend your arms up and out to your

sides, so that the dumbbells reach a position level with your shoulders

- 2) Lower slowly back to start position

Tip: Keep your head still throughout the movement, and maintain a slight bend at the elbows to avoid strain.

hand close to your ears with your elbows out and approximately in line with your ear lobes.

Action

Contract your abdominal muscles slowly to lift your torso, 15-25cm will be enough. Pause and lower under control.

Tip: Perform this exercise slowly to really target your abdominal muscles.

Tummy

A flabby and protruding tummy is more likely to be reduced by cardio work. However, resistance exercises are important as they will improve your posture and reduce back problems.

2 Fit ball crunch

Targets the large muscle that runs down the front of your torso. Using the fit ball will result in more muscles being involved in the exercise, specifically the deeper postural and stabilising muscles.

Start position

Lie on your back and bring your knees in to your chest, so that your thighs are at right angles to the ground and your lower legs are parallel to it and resting on top of the Fit ball (your heels should be place on the apex of the ball). Place the thumb and forefinger of each



PERFECT WOMAN WORKOUT EXERCISES

Arms

Poorly defined arms can make the rest of your body look weak, whatever your body type. To give them definition you need to target both the front and rear muscles.

3 Body weight bench dips
Targets the muscles on the back of your arms (the triceps) and rear shoulders



Start position

Place the palms of your hands behind your body close to your hips to support your weight on the bench. Your feet should be just beyond shoulder width-apart on the floor, with your knees bent to about a 90 degree angle. Keep your back in neutral.

Action

Lower your body by bending your arms, stop when they reach a 60-90 degree angle to the floor. Pause and then push back up.

Tip: Don't lock your elbows out when lifting to avoid strain

4 Biceps curls
Targets the muscles on the front of your upper arm

Start position

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, holding a dumbbell in each hand, with your thumbs facing out to the sides. Keep your back in neutral.



“Poorly defined arms can make the rest of your body look weak”

Action

Curl the dumbbells up to shoulder level. Pause and lower under control.

Tip: Don't swing the dumbbells, maintain full control on the exercise. Imagine that your elbows are pinned to your sides.

Chest

With a runner bean or pear-shaped body type you may want to increase your breast size. Although it is not possible to do this through resistance training it is possible to strengthen the muscles that support the breasts which can lift them and enhance your proportions. Larger women may want to reduce their upper body proportions and will need to do more cardio work accordingly.

5 Supine dumbbell chest fly
Targets chest and front of shoulders

Start position

Lie back on a weight training bench with

a dumbbell in each hand. Keep your feet flat on the floor. Hold the dumbbells directly above your shoulders (thumbs facing toward your head) with arms extended and elbows slightly bent.



Action

Lower the dumbbells outward so that they follow a controlled arc. Stop when your upper arms are parallel to the floor. Pause and return the dumbbells back to the start position.

Tip: Maintain symmetry of movement between the dumbbells and keep your wrists in neutral alignment (don't bend them inward or outward).

Butt and legs

Skinny legs will make the rest of you look weak, whatever your body type, whilst larger thighs and butt will emphasise a pear-shape. Runner beans will benefit in particular from the following exercise from a shaping perspective. Larger apple shapes will need to do more cardio to reduce fat and reveal the firmer thighs and lifted butt created by the exercise.

6 Supported leg, single leg dumbbell squat
Targets all leg muscles and butt

Start position

Hold a dumbbell in each hand, thumbs facing to the front and stand in front of a weights bench. Lift one leg and place its foot (toes turned under) on the bench behind you. Your front foot should be flat on the floor.

Action

Bend your front leg to lower your body to no more than a 90 degree angle. Pause and then push back up. Complete your designated number of repetitions, take 10 seconds' recovery and swap legs.



Tip: Don't allow your knee to travel beyond or outside of your ankle when lowering or lifting.

7+8 Inner and outer thigh machines

Nearly 90% of women, whatever their body type, suffer from cellulite. Cellulite is basically just fat. The orange peel appearance can be reduced by cardio work, following a healthy diet and performing weight training exercises.

Inner thigh machine

Targets the muscles on the inside of the thighs

Start position

Sit upright (or slightly back of upright) on the machine, with your legs against the machine's pads. Hold the machine grips.



Inner thigh machine

Action

Pull your legs together. Pause and then control the weights away from you as you return them to their starting position.

Outer thigh machine

Targets the muscles on the outside of the thighs

Start position

Assume a similar position as for the above exercise.



Outer thigh machine

Action

Push your legs away from you, pause and control the weights back to the starting position.

Tip: Perform the inner and outer thigh exercises with control, using a '2 count' for the first movement and a '3 count' when returning the weights to their starting position. This latter eccentric (muscle stretching as it contracts) contraction will recruit more muscle and maximise toning.

9 Machine standing heel raise

The calf muscles are often neglected in the training programmes of women. However, if you want to plump them up and give them some shape they need to be targeted. However, if you have large (muscled) calves you may wish to discard this exercise from your training routine or perform more reps (15-20) with a lighter weight.



Start position

Stand with your toes evenly placed supporting your weight on the foot bar of the machine. Keep your back in neutral. Support the machine's pads across your shoulders. Fix your gaze straight ahead.

Action

Extend your ankles to lift the weight and lower under control.

Tip: Lower to a comfortable position below the machine's foot bar, to avoid potential calf and Achilles tendon strain.

Exercise order

For all body types the Perfect woman workouts alternates upper body with lower body or trunk exercises, so that no one body part or muscle group is worked consecutively. This means that you will be able to tackle each exercise with a high level of energy, due to the in-built recovery. This will have a greater stimulatory effect on muscles and boost lean muscle and toning gains. If, for example the upper body was targeted with all the upper body exercises performed consecutively, then in all likelihood there would be a fall-off in performance as this area's muscles become increasingly fatigued. This would reduce the workout's potential.

PERFECT WOMAN TRAINING PLANS

Each plan assumes that you have been resistance training for at least two months. If you have not then spend two weeks training with light weights and/or fewer reps learning correct technique.

Do 3 resistance workouts a week, leaving at least a day in between each. Cardio train on different days where possible, or after your weights if doing in the same workout. Warm up with 3-4 minutes of gentle cardio and perform some functional movements, such as marching on the spot, lunges and arm swings. Stretch as part of your cool down.

To get the most from the perfect woman resistance workouts, the last reps of each

exercise should be difficult to complete, but this should not be at the expense of good technique.

How many repetitions?

Loading	Rep range	Comments
Light	15-20	Will tone muscle and have a moderate cardio effect
Medium	8-12	Will tone and build larger muscles
Medium/heavy	6-8	Will build larger muscles
Heavy	4-6	Will build powerful larger muscles
Very heavy	2-4	Will build, very strong larger muscles

Full recovery should be taken between sets regardless of body type

Lean (Runner Bean) body type RESISTANCE WORKOUTS

Exercise	Reps and sets and weight to lift	Comments
Front/lateral dumbbell lift	Week 1 3 x 10 @ medium weight, 3 x 10 @ medium weight, 3 x 15 @ light weight	With the emphasis on medium and heavy weights you will give your body every chance of increasing its muscle mass, shaping and toning you in the process
Single leg dumbbell squat	Week 2 3 x 15 @ light weight, 3 x 10 @ medium weight, 3 x 12 @ medium weight	For body weight exercises start with 3 x 10 reps and add a rep or two each week
Fit ball crunch	Week 3 3 x 15 @ light weight, 3 x 12 @ medium weight, 4 x 6 @ heavy weight	
Supine dumbbell flye	Week 4 4 x 6 @ heavy weight, 3 x 12 @ medium weight, 3 x 12 @ medium weight	
Calf raise		
Bench dips		
Inner thigh machine		
Biceps curl		
Outer thigh machine		

Cardio workouts

Number per week: 2 **Duration:** no more than 20 minutes maximum **Level of effort:** easy/moderate

Dietary recommendation for Runner Bean types

To give your body every chance of increasing its amount of muscle, you will need to over-eat by 300 calories four days a week (crucial for the days you train) and maintain a balance between calories in and calories out on the other days.

Pear and Apple body types RESISTANCE WORKOUTS

Exercise	Reps and sets and weight to lift	Comments
Front/lateral dumbbell lift	Week 1 3 x 15 @ light weight, 3 x 10 @ medium weight, 3 x 16 @ light weight	There is a greater emphasis on reps performed for these body types. This will have a moderate cardio effect and will increase calorie burning, as well as shaping and toning muscle. However, to get the most from this training plan you must cardio train as indicated
Single leg dumbbell squat	Week 2 3 x 16 @ light weight, 3 x 10 @ medium weight, 4 x 18 @ light weight	Increase body weight exercises as per lean body type
Fit ball crunch	Week 3 3 x 18 @ light weight, 3 x 10 @ medium weight, 3 x 20 @ light weight	
Supine dumbbell flye	Week 4 4 x 15 @ light weight, 4 x 8 @ medium weight, 4 x 16 @ light weight	
Calf raise		
Bench dips		
Inner thigh machine		
Biceps curl		
Outer thigh machine		

Cardio workouts

Number per week: 3-5 **Duration:** 15-60 minutes maximum **Level of effort:** easy/moderate

Dietary advice for Pear and Apple body types

Match calories in with calories out on the days you train and under eat by 300 calories 2 days per week, on the days when you are not training.