

A Leaner, Stronger Body—In 15 Minutes a Day!

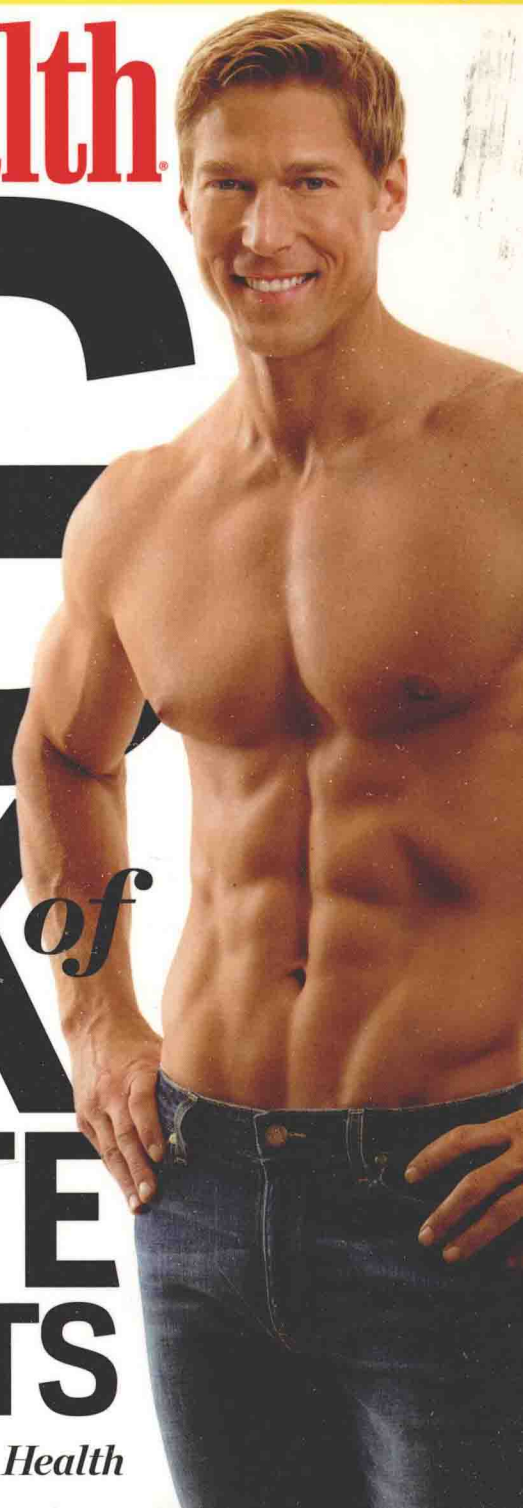
THE **Men's Health**

**BIG**

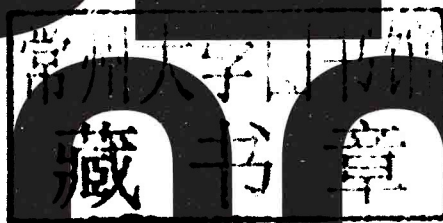
**BOOK** *of*

**15** **MINUTE**  
**WORKOUTS**

By SELENE YEAGER and the editors of *Men's Health*



THE **Men's Health**  
**BIG**  
**BOOK** *of*  
**15 MINUTE**  
**WORKOUTS**



The information in this book is meant to supplement, not replace, proper exercise training. All forms of exercise pose some inherent risks. The editors and publisher advise readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the exercises in this book, be sure that your equipment is well-maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training, and fitness. The exercise and dietary programs in this book are not intended as a substitute for any exercise routine or dietary regimen that may have been prescribed by your doctor. As with all exercise and dietary programs, you should get your doctor's approval before beginning.

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# **Chapter 1:** **The Genius of the** **15-Minute Workout**

Why Less Is More When It Comes to Exercising  
for Fitness, Strength, and Health.

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# Acknowledgments

**I**t takes a small army to create a big book. And this Big Book was no exception. I can't possibly give sufficient thanks to all those who helped move this project from a simple idea to a big, thick book filled to the brim with really cool, superfast workouts. But I'll try, first by sharing my appreciation for *Men's Health* magazine Editor-in-Chief David Zinczenko and the entire *Men's Health* staff for creating such a successful brand that inspires men to live healthier lives. It's my hope that this book helps to forward that mission.

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— *Selene Yeager*





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# **Introduction:** **The 15-Minute Secret**

Why 15 Minutes Is All You Need to  
Add Lean Muscle, Shed That Gut,  
Build Endurance, and Gain Tremendous Confidence.

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# **I don't have time to**

work out. Does that sound familiar? Sure it does. We've all said it at one time or another. Lack of time is the number-one reason men, in survey after survey, give for why they don't exercise.

Look, time is a guy's most precious commodity these days—because he has so little “free time” to do what he wants. You, too, no doubt. You work 50 to 60 hours a week. You need to shop for food and wash your underwear. Maybe you have a family or a big social life. You have investments to monitor, you volunteer at a homeless shelter, your old man needs help fixing the backyard fence. And there are tweets to post! When are you going to find an hour or so to run to the gym three or four times a week?



# The 15-Minute Secret

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You probably can't. But you don't have to. You don't need an hour to get in shape. Heck, you don't even need a half hour if you exercise strategically. All you need to build the body you want is 15 minutes. According to a recent study published in the *European Journal of Applied Physiology*, 15 minutes of resistance training was just as effective as 35 minutes was in elevating resting energy expenditure for up to 72 hours after the exercise. That means you can burn calories and build muscle in half the time you thought possible. And you'll actually have a much better chance of slimming down with those quick workouts than lengthy gym sessions. A study in the *International Journal of Sports Medicine* found that volunteers who were trying to lose weight had a much better chance of sticking to an exercise plan if their workouts were cut to 15 minutes.

It makes sense. You can always find 15 minutes to spare, right? (If you need help, see "Free Minutes!" on page x for simple ways to squeeze time into a busy day.) Fifteen minutes for something so important to your health as exercise is totally doable with a little effort. That's why we've created this book and a superfast fitness program composed entirely of 15-minute workouts. Now, just because we're slashing workout time by half or more doesn't mean you're getting any less effective of a workout. Most of these workouts are designed as time-efficient circuits. You activate just as many muscle fibers—maybe even more—and you accomplish that a lot

quicker, without a lot of down time, so you're actually adding an aerobic component to strength-training. Every second of exercise will count a little more than it ever has before. Instead of working out longer, you'll be working out smarter and faster so you can get on with the rest of your life.

What's more, you'll never get bored with the workouts in this book simply because there are so many to try. You'll find total-body workouts using barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, sandbags, even exercise bands. No access to equipment? That's okay. You can choose from a dozen metabolic workouts that use only your own bodyweight for resistance. There are workouts that target specific body parts—your chest, your legs, your core. You'll find 15-minute programs customized to your particular body type, and high-intensity interval training workouts that crank up your metabolism fast and keep it elevated for hours so you continue burning calories long after you've hit the shower. There are workouts to prevent and heal aches and pains. There are even workouts that'll help you be stronger, sexier, and last longer in bed. And because research has proven that combining a nutrition plan with an exercise program is more effective than diet or exercise alone, we've created a weight-loss and nutrition chapter—complete with delicious recipes—that'll deliver fast results. Everything in the book, even the recipes, are choreographed to be quick and efficient. That means you'll be ready to

eat in 15 minutes or less, too!

After paging through this book, you'll quickly recognize that the vast majority of the photographs show resistance or weight-lifting exercises. We go heavy on muscle-building because of the importance of muscle to a man's overall health. It's not simply for performance or vanity. Recent research shows that diminished muscle mass and strength are empirically linked to declines in the immune system, the onset of heart disease and type 2 diabetes, as well as weaker bones, stiffer joints, and slumping postures. Muscle mass has also been shown to play a strategic role in protein metabolism, which is particularly important in responding to stress. Decreased muscle mass also correlates with a decline in your body's metabolic rate—the rate at which your body burns calories. Muscle burns more calories

at rest than fat does. As you get older, your body naturally loses muscle mass. If you don't do anything about it (read: strength train) and you continue to eat as much as you did in your 20s, you will, without a doubt, put on weight.

You can see why the *Men's Health Big Book of 15-Minute Workouts* can be such an important tool for good health and longevity. By keeping workouts brief, you are more likely to do them regularly. By making workouts mostly about building muscle, you automatically burn more calories; strengthen your heart, bones and joints; and fortify your body against the diseases and illnesses that plague men who don't make the time to take care of themselves.

Your time has come to improve your life, for life!

It takes just 15 minutes to start—right now.

# The 15-Minute Secret

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## Free Minutes!

15 WAYS TO FIND 15 MINUTES FOR EXERCISE EVERY DAY!  
(DITCH THE STUFF THAT'S WASTING YOUR PRECIOUS TIME.)

**1. FLIP OFF FACEBOOK.** On average, Americans now spend a whopping 7 hours a month on Facebook, according to Nielsen. Let's do the math: Seven hours a month works out to 105 minutes each week, or hmmm, guess what, exactly 15 minutes every single day. You don't have to banish FB from your life entirely, but limit it to two short sessions a day, like once in the morning over coffee and later in the evening. Then log out and stay off.

**2. SAY "NO!"** We know. Guys think they can do it all and you hate to say "no." But we think you'll really like it once you try it. Next time someone (not your big boss) asks you to do something you really don't want or need to do, say, "I'm sorry. No. I just can't," and feel the freedom—and all that free time—wash over you.

**3. PLAN YOUR PEAKS.** We all have certain times of the day when we are most focused and productive. Schedule your biggest tasks for that time (for many people it's in the morning, say 9 a.m.). You'll get it done more quickly and efficiently than if you wait to tackle it during a natural low point (like midafternoon).

**4. DO ONE THING AT A TIME.** We all pride ourselves as being supreme multi-taskers, but trying to do too many things at once means getting nothing done. Sit down with your to-do list. Pick an item, and do it and only it. You'll be shocked at how quickly each task gets done when you give it your full energy and attention.

**5. RECORD YOUR SHOWS.** A typical hour-long TV show contains just 40 to 42 minutes of real content—the rest is commercials. Watch two shows and that's 40 to 45 minutes you could have spent doing something else. It's well worth investing in a digital TV recorder, so you can watch just what you want when you want, and free up hours (and at the end of the year, days) to pursue more healthy activities, like 15-minute workouts.

**6. LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE.** Is it really all that important that your hubcaps be spotless? Stop wasting precious time with a bottle of Armor All, buffing every little imperfection out of your bucket seats, and aim for adequate instead.

**7. BE DECISIVE!** You can easily waste hours choosing what home sound system is best or which brand of sneakers to buy (it's called analysis paralysis). At some point, you need to stop waffling and move forward. Set a time limit, say 45 minutes, for comparison shopping, weighing pros and cons, etc., then make a decision and go forth.



**8. BUY TIME.** Yes, you actually can buy more hours in the day by paying for services that suck up tons of time. Before you pooh-pooh the idea of hiring a laundry or cleaning service, sit down and do a little math. What is an hour of your time worth? How do you spend your disposable income? When you consider that you might be blowing a few hundred bucks on restaurant meals and golf accessories you don't really need while you slave away all your spare time mowing the back 40, it's time to reconsider your expenditures. Hire a landscaping service to do the heavy duty stuff a few times a month and buy yourself hours every week.

**9. INK IT IN YOUR CALENDAR.** Amazing how you find time for everything on your calendar, right? That's because it's there in black and white demanding your attention (and time). Block out your workouts as you would work appointments and you won't miss a one.

**10. USE AN EGG TIMER.** Certain activities are black holes for time. All the little things you plan to do for just a few minutes—surfing the Web; playing games on your phone; “window shopping” all the new apps for your iPhone or iPad—can suck away hours if you're not careful. Keep an egg timer on your desk. When you sit down, set it for 15 or 20 minutes. Then, shut down when the bell rings.

**11. TOUCH IT ONCE.** When a paper comes across your desk (or in the mail), touch it once and deal with it immediately. Piling up stacks of paper not only creates distracting clutter, you also waste time revisiting it again (and again) or worse, losing something important. (Try it with email too.)

**12. MAKE A CALL.** IMing and emailing can be great time savers. But sometimes it takes 15 messages to accomplish what you could do in a 40-second phone call. As soon as it starts getting complicated, pick up the phone.

**13. PUT THINGS IN THEIR PLACES.** I used to waste minutes (hours...days) looking for my keys. At any given time they could be anywhere, and I mean anywhere—coat pockets, drawers, messenger bags, the clothes dryer, my car, and, my personal favorite, hanging from the door lock. Finally, I bought a 75-cent hook, hung it by the phone as my designated key spot, and I have not lost my keys since. Try this trick with anything you lose regularly. It works.

**14. SET OUT YOUR STUFF.** This one is repeated more often than *It's a Wonderful Life* at Christmas, but it works. Setting out your exercise clothes at night makes it far more likely that you will get up and get moving for a morning workout, instead of hitting snooze (or worse, skipping the whole affair entirely) because it's too

daunting to get out and start rummaging around for your workout gear.

**15. GET UP 15 MINUTES EARLIER.** Ridiculously simple, right? Yep, and it works. Vow to get up and work out at 5 a.m. every day and you'll never do it. But even the most nocturnal of night owls can set their alarm (and roll out of the sack) a mere 15 minutes earlier in the morning. Even if you don't use that extra time for your workout, it gets you out the door and to your office earlier than usual, so you get more done earlier in the day. So you're more likely to feel entitled to take that 15 minutes for yourself later in the day.

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# Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Introduction: <b>The 15-Minute Secret</b>	vi
Chapter 1: <b>The Genius of the 15-Minute Workout</b>	xii
Chapter 2: <b>All of Your 15-Minute-Workout Questions Answered</b>	10
Chapter 3: <b>The Superfast Weight-Loss System</b>	20
Chapter 4: <b>15-Minute Total-Body Workouts</b>	28
Chapter 5: <b>15-Minute Fat-Burning Workouts</b>	78
Chapter 6: <b>15-Minute Abs &amp; Core Workouts</b>	104
Chapter 7: <b>15-Minute Shoulders &amp; Arms Workouts</b>	138
Chapter 8: <b>15-Minute Workouts for Chest &amp; Back</b>	166
Chapter 9: <b>15-Minute Workouts for Legs &amp; Glutes</b>	198
Chapter 10: <b>15-Minute Cardio Interval Training Workouts</b>	226
Chapter 11: <b>The 15-Minute Plan to Fight Fat with Food</b>	242
Chapter 12: <b>15-Minute Workouts for Special Gear</b>	252
Chapter 13: <b>15-Minute Workouts for Better Sex</b>	298
Chapter 14: <b>15-Minute Healing Workouts</b>	322
Chapter 15: <b>15-Minute Sports-Training Workouts</b>	350
Index	380

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men live by the credo that more is better. If 1 tablespoon of cough syrup will ease your cold symptoms, well then 2 will work even faster. What's better then a cheeseburger? A double cheeseburger with extra pickles. And so it seems for exercise as well. If 45 minutes in the gym will trim that belly, then 2 hours must transform us into, well, *Men's Health* cover models.

But take a look at the cardio junkies next time you're at the gym. You know the ones who are slogging out endless miles on the treadmill or elliptical trainer. If you watch them over time, you'll notice something startling: Their bodies don't change. At all. Not one iota. Most of them are just as soft when they step off the treadmill for the 1,000th time as they were when they first hopped aboard. That's because they're stuck in the old thinking that if you do hours and hours



# The Genius of the 15-Minute Workout

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of cardio, you'll burn pounds and pounds of fat. Wrong. Cutting-edge science all points in the opposite direction: If you want to scorch calories, burn fat, and get faster and stronger, go harder, not longer.

The more, more, more mind set is more than a waste of time; it keeps many people from doing anything. Since we think we have to do a ton to get results, sometimes we don't exercise at all. It's a mentality that sets us up for failure before we even start. As it turns out, it is far more important to know what kind of exercise to do rather than how long to do it for. Because much of what we think is going to make us thin or keep us fit actually does neither. In a study published in the *International Journal of Sports Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism* researchers asked a group of volunteers to do 45 minutes of steady, moderate cardio exercise (like a brisk elliptical workout) 5 days a week for 12 weeks and compared their results to another group that did no exercise. The result? At the end of the study, the exercisers had experienced no change in their body composition, same as their couch-potato peers. Depressing? Not at all. The good news is that you have permission to stop wasting your time. You can finally free yourself from marathon gym sessions. Instead, exercise scientists now say you can shed fat, firm flabby spots, boost your heart health, and fend off a host of ills, both mental and physical, not by doing more, but by doing less. You can do this in as little as 15 minutes if you do the right program.

## Brief Workouts, Big Rewards

That's exactly what you get with the *Men's Health Big Book of 15-Minute Workouts*: A scientifically proven shortcut to building muscle and losing weight. We've pooled all our expertise and pored through the latest research to create what we call our Superfast Workout Program. At the heart of it is resistance training, which has been proven to be the quickest way to burn fat and build a lean, hard body. When you lift weights, microscopic tears occur in your muscle fibers, which sounds like a bad thing, but it's actually the first step in shedding blubber and building strength. This fiber breakdown speeds up a process called muscle protein synthesis that uses amino acids to repair and reinforce those fibers—i.e., you're building muscle. That helps you lose weight in a few ways. One, all that lifting and rebuilding burns calories not just while you're exercising, but also long after you're done. Two, muscle is metabolically more active than fat, meaning that it burns more calories just to sustain itself. The more muscle you have on your frame, the more calories you are burning even when that frame is lounging on the sofa! Finally, being stronger makes you more active. Research shows that people become more spontaneously active when they start lifting weights because they're stronger and have more energy. The only downside to all this might be having to buy a smaller belt for your trousers.



A pound of muscle takes up 20 percent less space than a pound of fat. So you'll be leaner all over.

The best part: You can get all these body-building benefits in no time—just 15 minutes is all it takes. That's right, we've condensed the reps and removed all the sitting around and waiting between moves for a supereffective and superfast workout. It's not only time-efficient, but it also increases your energy expenditure both during and after exercising. Researchers from Southern Illinois University recently found that one set of 10 reps of 9 exercises (which took less than 15 minutes to complete, by the way) raised resting energy expenditure (the number of calories you burn when you're just sitting around) by just as much as three sets, which took the volunteers 35 minutes to do. Fifteen or 35? Take your pick.

Finally, to speed your results, if weight loss is your goal, we've added cardio to the mix. Not the 45-minutes-to-an-hour-a-day variety that may barely budge the scale, but the superfast fat burn variety, known in scientific circles as high-intensity interval training (or HIIT). While the government keeps upping the ante on its cardio exercise recommendation—up a half hour, from 60 minutes a day to 90 minutes a day for weight loss—a large and growing body of research is pointing in the opposite direction—that HIIT is drastically superior to regular cardio workouts in improving cardiovascular functioning, improving insulin sensitivity, and, of course,

burning calories. What determines whether or not you shed fat is not the duration of your workouts, but the intensity. In other words, it'll take many hours to walk away from that extra weight. But you can sprint it off in no time.

Superfast exercise builds up lactic acid in your muscles because you're working harder and faster than your body can clear it, which triggers a release of human growth hormone, a powerful natural elixir that promotes fat loss and muscle building and will crank your metabolism to Maserati intensity. And it works fast. Just 30 seconds of sprinting on a stationary bike is enough to send your level of the growth hormone soaring by 530 percent. Another important benefit of interval training: Your metabolism stays elevated for up to 24 hours after a high-intensity workout.

All that fat burning translates into a leaner you in half the workout time. In a study of 18 volunteers, Australian researchers found that those who performed superfast workouts that included 8-second full-on sprints followed by 12 seconds of recovery 3 days a week lost about 5½ pounds while those in a similar group who pedaled for twice as long at an average pace actually gained a pound of fat over the same period. Even better, the exercisers who were heavier at the start shed the most, with two losing about 18 pounds each. Even better, the weight you lose is pure fat. In one study by Laval University, researchers found that even when HIIT exercisers burned half as many calories during their actual

# The Genius of the 15-Minute Workout

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workout sessions, they still lost nine times more fat after 15 weeks of working out than their traditional long-cardio-bout peers did after 20 weeks.

The benefits don't stop at weight loss. HIIT workouts also help you get fitter faster (so you have more energy for everything you love to do). In a striking head-to-head showdown, Canadian researchers found that a group of exercisers who cranked out short stationary bike workouts that included a series of 30-second sprints 3 days a week improved their fitness by about 30 percent—nearly identical to the improvements made by a similar group of exercisers who pedaled for 90 minutes to 2 hours at a lesser intensity.

Interval training is also the ticket for the fast path to good health. Researchers in Norway reported that interval training was far more effective at reducing blood pressure, controlling blood sugar, and improving cholesterol than traditional one-speed workouts.

When you stop and think about how your body works, all this seemingly counterintuitive science suddenly makes a lot of sense. Our bodies are built to adapt to the work we demand of them. When you get up and go out the door for a leisurely jog, you're asking your slow-twitch (endurance) muscle fibers to wake up and get to work, but all of those fast-twitch (speed and power) muscle fibers go largely untapped. Over time, many of the neurons that once served fast-twitch fibers will get rewired to serve their slower counterparts. Others

will die off. Turning up the intensity of your workouts not only gives you firmer, more sculpted muscle tone by tapping into all of those unused fibers, but also speeds up your fitness gains, says HIIT-training researcher Martin Gibala, PhD, professor of kinesiology at McMaster University. "High-intensity exercise kind of shocks your system. Your body thinks, 'He's making me do some really hard work,' so it increases your total exercise capacity—your ability to use oxygen and burn fat—in a fraction of the time than if you'd exercised less intensely," he says. In fact, according to neuromuscular researcher Christopher Knight, PhD, of the University of Delaware in Newark, there's an almost immediate effect when you tap into your fast-twitch fibers with strength training and/or high-speed intervals. "We've found that you can increase your fast-twitch firing rates after just 1 week of training," he says.

That's the superfast secret. You combine 15-minute resistance training workouts with 15-minute HIIT workouts over the course of a week to lose the most weight. Scientists already know that combining cardio and resistance training works faster and better than either alone. When Pennsylvania State University researchers put overweight people on a diet and then had them do cardio, resistance training and cardio, or no exercise at all, they found that though each group lost roughly 21 pounds, the lifters dropped 6 more pounds, or—40 percent more—of fat. That's right, nearly every ounce they lost