

we recharged our lives!

Discover how two *SHAPE* readers transformed their lives in 3 months.

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Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to overcome your fears, become fitter and stronger from the inside out, and take charge of your life to realize your full potential? Two women did just that during *Shape's* first ever mind and body makeover.

Stuck in a rut and unable to sustain the physical activity and dietary habits to achieve their fitness goals—this was the struggle that Janice Ng, 24, and Irene Chong, 27, dealt with daily until they were chosen to take part in *Shape's* first reader mind and body makeover project.

Chosen from a pool of diverse entries,

Janice, a product technologist, and Irene, a store manager, were paired with our team of experts comprising a life coach, personal trainer, Pilates instructor and nutritionist, who together, showed them how to get their lives (and goals) back on track. Read on to discover how Janice and Irene transformed their lives for the better, and how you can too!



Our *SHAPE*
makeover
winners,
Janice, 24,
and Irene, 27.

Janice Ng, from Petaling Jaya had been jogging 2-3 times a week prior to joining the *Shape* makeover, but felt she hadn't been getting any fitter or toned. Standing at 1.6m and weighing a mere 50 kilograms, Janice wasn't looking to lose weight, but says her lack of muscle tone was mostly due to the fact that she wasn't incorporating any strength training into her exercise routine. "I just didn't know how to," she says.

However, becoming fitter wasn't her only concern—she felt that her poor posture and self-esteem were also weighing her down. Janice's slightly slumped posture is the result of having a mild form of scoliosis—an abnormal curvature of the spine that can result in uneven shoulders, one shoulder blade appearing more prominent than the other, an uneven waist, fatigue, and one hip being higher than the other.

In Janice's case, scoliosis was also giving her neck and shoulder pains. This was where Pilates Institute of Australasia-certified instructor Ivy Chim came to the rescue. Chim prescribed Janice a one-on-one Pilates session once a week, in addition to a weekly Pilates mat class to help improve her posture. She also had Janice work the muscles of both sides of her body equally to strengthen

them evenly. "I saw an improvement in just 4 weeks," says Janice, adding: "I began standing up straighter and feeling more energetic."

To help address her low self-esteem, Janice met with life coach Sharmini Hensen, NS-NLP Master Practitioner, every 2 weeks. "My life coaching sessions with Sharmini changed my life because they helped change my outlook on everything," says Janice. "Sharmini gave me ideas on how to handle difficult situations and how to turn them around."



THE EXPERT'S TAKE

"Janice was very focused on achieving a personal breakthrough," says Hensen. "She was experiencing self-doubt and negativity, but really wanted to be more optimistic, which made her very open to new ideas and concepts. This also made working with her effortless; Janice wanted to make a change in her personal life, and so put up no resistance to the necessary actions to that end."

Hensen says she witnessed Janice blossom gradually as their sessions progressed. "At first, her posture was hunched, her voice low, and she would come to our meetings in track pants, but later, she began wearing makeup, skirts, brighter colors and pretty sandals."

On the personal front, Hensen helped Janice work up the courage to tackle her difficult relationship with her mother. "She has been facing a lot of challenges with her mother, but eventually realized that these challenges were really self-made," says Hensen. Shy and reserved, Janice also craved for a more active social life. "She rarely went out, but now she has a packed social calendar that she actually has to 'work on!'"

Making these powerful changes in her personal life prompted Janice to take charge of another aspect of her life: Her career: As a result, she gave up her job for a more challenging but proportionately more rewarding one. "She had

never done this before. Now she's landed a job at a multinational company that she never thought she would get. "The one thing that Janice wanted the most was to be a role model who inspired other people to say: 'I want to be just like that'.

Hensen adds: "She now realizes that the power to respond to problems and be different is within her."

LEARNING HOW TO EAT MINDFULLY

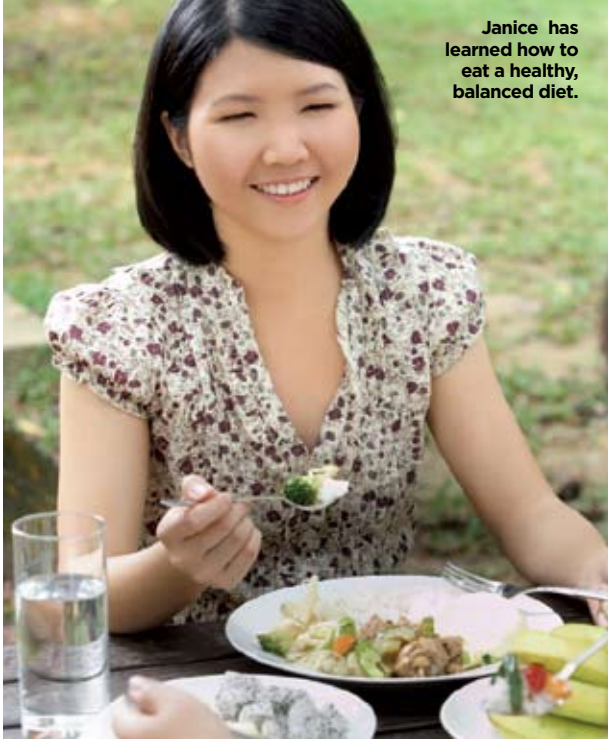
Janice is aware that having a balanced diet is important for staying in good health, but admits that this is one principle she's failed to incorporate into her daily routine.



JANICE'S CHALLENGE

“I want to be more positive.”

Janice has learned how to eat a healthy, balanced diet.



Life coach Sharmini Hensen showed Janice how to handle challenges and turn them around.



A self-confessed emotional eater, Janice says she loves snacking on fat-and sugar-laden treats such as cookies, cake, fried banana fritters and donuts, even when she's not hungry.

"I had been over-indulging in carbohydrates and meat, and feeling like I've had no control over my eating habits. I knew it wasn't healthy, but my mindset was to 'eat now and suffer later' ", says Janice. This also meant that she wasn't getting her daily fill of fiber- and nutrient-rich fruit and vegetables. "I'd tell myself that I'd do it the next week, but my eating habits just never changed." As a result, Janice's weight began creeping up.

"Now, I make a conscious effort to pick items from every food group."

To get her diet back on track, Janice consulted with Cres Wellness nutritionist Pauline Lai, B.Sc (Hons), Nutrition Science. "Pauline has taught me how to be more aware of my food choices. Now, I make a conscious effort to pick items from every food group and eat 3 servings of vegetables every day. She's also made me realize that giving in to my emotions and cravings all the time will eventually affect my health," says Janice, adding: "Now, I eat fruit at every meal and as a snack twice a day."

To ensure that Janice's meals are balanced and rich in fiber as well as nutrients, Lai recommended that she eat wholegrain cereals, protein-rich egg, and fruit for breakfast; a reduced serving of rice with generous portions of vegetables for fiber, lean meat, tofu or an egg for protein, and a serving of fruit for lunch and dinner; and a handful of nuts or dried fruit as a snack in-between meals.

Janice's diet prescription: Plenty of nutrient-rich pickings from every food group.



JANICE'S CHALLENGE

A CORE-STRENGTHENING WORKOUT

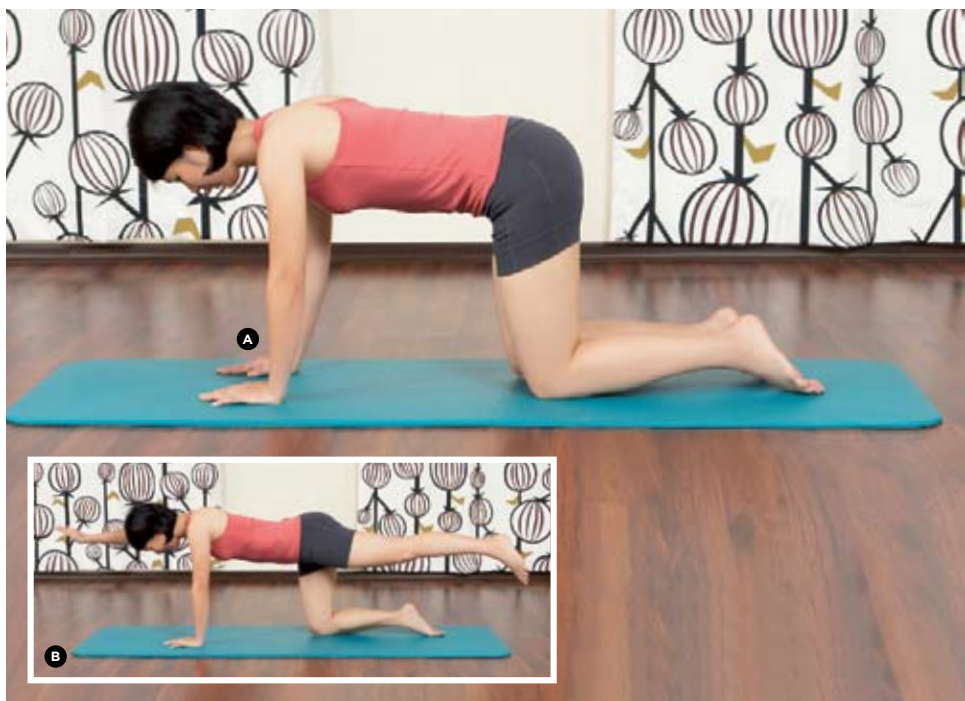


"Janice needs to retrain the left side of her body,

which is her weaker side. She also needs to strengthen both sides of her body evenly," says Ivy Chim, Janice's Pilates instructor throughout the makeover. "Scoliosis has caused a lot of imbalances in her back muscles," she explains.

To help Janice re-balance her body, Chim taught her how to stretch her left side while working both sides to make them equally as strong. "In month 1, Janice worked on her posture and improving her core strength with abdominal work, while in month 2, she worked on toning her arms, correcting her scoliosis and strengthening her core further. Month 3 was all about full-body training including plenty arm and leg work for toning and strengthening. "Janice is now stronger and more conscious of her posture. However, correcting her scoliosis is still a work-in-progress," says Chim. To continue improving her posture on her own, Chim recommends that Janice swim, walk and continue with her weekly Pilates mat classes. Chim designed the following mat-based Pilates workout to help treat Janice's scoliosis and strengthen her core.

1 The Hundreds
Lie on your back with both hands by your sides, palms faced down, your knees bent and drawn in to your chest. Keep your chin in line with your spine the entire length of your spine on the mat [A]. Curl your head and upper body upwards using your abdominal muscles and extend your legs up and out to a 45 degree angle simultaneously [B]. Breathe in and out in this position 10 times.



2 'Walking'
Kneel on your hands and knees with your hands directly under your shoulders and knees directly under your hips [A]. Pull in your abdominal muscles to keep your back straight, not arched. Slowly extend your right arm forward and your left leg backwards so that they are in line with your spine [B]. Hold for 1 count, then lower and repeat on the other side. Perform 10 reps.



iA



iiB

3 Leg exercises

i) FOR THE INNER THIGHS Lie down on your right side with your head resting on your right arm. Bend your left knee over your right leg, which should be outstretched [iA]. Raise your right leg as high as you can and then lower it by 90% (your next starting position) so it doesn't touch the floor [iiB]. Perform 10 reps then repeat on your other side.

ii) FOR THE OUTER THIGHS Lie down on your right side with your head resting on your right arm. Bend your bottom leg slightly. Extend your left leg so it is in line with your hip [iiA]. Raise it by 15cm above your hip and then lower it to hip level [iiB] (this is your next starting position). Perform 10 reps then repeat on your other side.



iiA



iiB



A



B



C

4 'Swimming'

Lie face down, outstretched on a mat. Position your legs hip-width apart and stretch your arms out in front of you [A]. Raise your right arm and left leg, making sure to keep them parallel [B], then lower them and immediately switch with your left arm and right leg [C]. Pulse for 20-30 reps.



5 Arm exercises with a resistance band
i) TRICEPS PULLS Sit upright on a mat with your knees bent and hip-width apart. Hook a resistance band around the bottom of your feet, grasp both ends of the band firmly with your hands [iA] and lean your upper body forward [iB]. While keeping your elbows close to your sides, extend your hands backwards [iC], then bend your arms from the elbows to return to the starting position. Perform 10 reps.



ii) BICEPS CURLS Sit upright on a mat with your knees bent and hip-width apart. Hook a resistance band around the bottom of your feet, grasp both ends of the band firmly with your arms extended in front of you [iiA], and pull it towards your chest without moving your upper arms [iiB]. Extend arms back to starting position. Perform 10 reps.



As a store manager at an international food and beverage chain, **Irene Chong**, from Kuala Lumpur, often finds herself taking on more responsibility than she can handle, and as a result, spreads herself so thin that she rarely has time to take care of herself. “Apart from training my staff, I also help my colleagues with their tasks, organize events, and attend meetings, all of which fill up most of my days.”

Working at such a frantic pace almost every day leaves little time for Irene to exercise, manage her diet, *and* deal with the emotional issues that she feels have been holding her back from achieving her personal goals. Her target: To give her confidence a boost. But to achieve this, Irene, with the help of our experts, realized that she *has* to manage her weight, improve her fitness, eat healthily, and, most importantly, face her emotional roadblocks.

Although excited, Irene was initially apprehensive about following through with the 3-month project. “It was something that was way out of my comfort zone, and I was worried about juggling my workouts, life coaching, diet and photo shoots, because my job comes with a lot of last ‘must-dos’.

“Plus, I expected a lot of pressure from the experts and the *SHAPE* team, but it didn’t turn out that way. The project was organized such that it was entirely up to me to make my own decisions,” says Irene.

The biggest surprise was the reaction she got from her friends, colleagues and family. “I chose some of my closest friends to talk to about the makeover, and they turned out to be more supportive than I had expected. That felt really good.

“My mother has diabetes and has been urging me to eat healthily, so she’s also happy that I’m heading in the right direction.” Irene also made it a point to confide in her supervisor at work. “I explained that I could no longer accommodate last-minute tasks because I needed to make time to work on myself. I also approached my colleagues and managers about swapping shifts to accommodate my physical training and life coaching sessions. I’m so glad I did because I ended up having the support of everyone around me. No one thought that I would ever do anything ‘healthy’”, she admits, adding: “This made me realize that I had to make the most of this opportunity.”

To get started on an exercise routine, Irene met with California Fitness personal trainer Erni Hasniza at the gym’s Mid Valley outlet about once a week and worked out on her own 1-2 times a week. Making it to the gym regularly initially proved to be a challenge for Irene due to her hectic schedule, so she penciled in her workouts on days she didn’t have to work. With the guidance of Erni, Irene learned the basics of exercise.

“I find the environment and machines at the gym very intimidating,” says the exercise novice. “But at least now I understand how a workout should progress.” Plus, she says proudly: “My stamina has definitely improved. I walked up 8 flights



IRENE'S CHALLENGE

“I need more confidence.”

Irene's diet prescription: Lower-calorie foods that are also low in fat but high in fibre and nutrients; and less of her favorite fast foods.



of stairs to my apartment very quickly the other day. I couldn't do that without feeling like passing out before this!" Irene says she is considering getting a gym membership, but is also looking for ways to stay active outdoors and at home.

Even though finding her footing outside her comfort zone was a big challenge, Irene says it was her sessions with life coach Sharmini Hensen that she enjoyed the most. "She helped me work out my issues but at the same time, gave me a lot of space. This approach made me feel comfortable but also made a huge impact on me.

"The *SHAPE* makeover has made me realize that it's all in the mind, and that I need to focus on making small changes instead of expecting drastic results, which can be disappointing. I've learned to look at the bigger picture."



THE EXPERT'S TAKE

"My journey with Irene was a very challenging one because of her inner conflicts. For example, she wanted to lose weight, but didn't think she could; she wanted to be different, but had doubts if she could. Plus, she was also doubting if there was such a thing as positivity," says Hensen.

To connect with Irene, Hensen adopted a laidback coaching style. "We spent a lot of time hanging out and just chatting about life, her aspirations and what she's already created. At 27, Irene has accomplished a lot, but she's got to translate her abilities into life experiences," says Hensen. Irene, she adds, constantly compares herself to others. "We created a yardstick of *her* best, so that we could constantly assess if she was being at her best." This helped Irene break through her initial resistance to change.

"At first, there were a lot of excuses. Now, she makes time to do what needs to be done. She's self-motivated, working out on her own, changing her eating habits, and feeling good about herself. She finally realized that these 3 months were the landing pad for her final outcome. She didn't have faith, so it took a team of people who

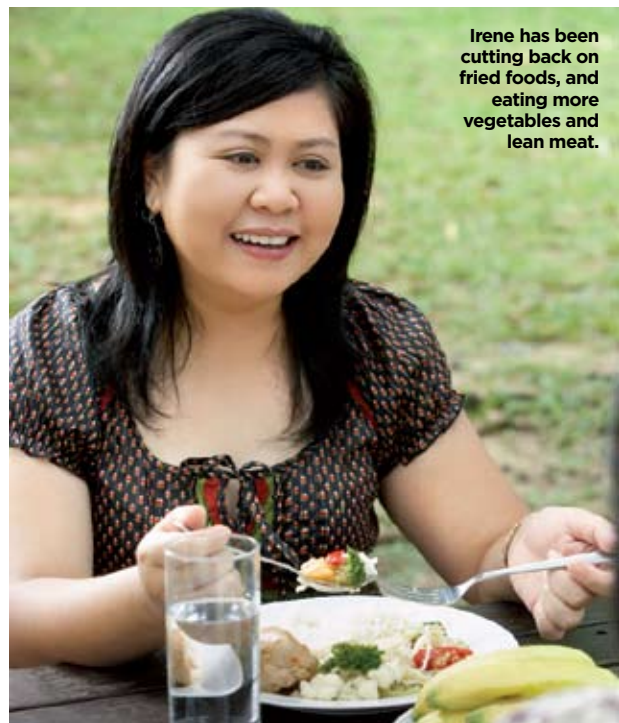
have faith in her to bring about changes. Now she's got it and she's taking responsibility for her life."

THE DIET CHALLENGE

As far as her diet was concerned, Irene had a 2-pronged challenge: Easing herself into healthier food choices and overcoming an aversion to certain types of foods. "I don't like vegetables," she declared at the start of the makeover. "I eat fruit once in awhile, but only bananas." Improving her diet was no easy feat for Irene. Prior to her makeover, she ate erratically, loathed vegetables, rarely ate fruit, and her diet comprised quick and easy comfort foods such as burgers, *nasi lemak* and plenty of refined carbohydrates such as white rice and noodles. And thanks to her long working hours, Irene binged during late night *dim sum* feasts almost daily. But with the help of Cres Wellness nutritionist Pauline Lai and encouragement from her mother, Irene began to slowly, but gradually incorporate vegetables and more fruit into her meals.

For Irene, breakfast typically comprised a Sausage McMuffin, hash brown and Coke from McDonald's at about 11am. Lunch was an occasional affair. "If I did eat, I would have a plate of *nasi lemak* or fried rice at about 4pm." This would usually be accompanied by a Coke or *teh-o-ais limau*. "I like these types of foods because they're convenient and tasty." If she felt peckish after, Irene would have an iced chocolate or latte.

Convenience was also often a factor when dinner time rolled around. "I mostly eat out and my dinners times have been very erratic. There are times when I would eat as late as midnight," she admits. Her late night food choices included *dim sum* ("I've been having a lot of these") and *won ton mee*. Her favorite vices: Fried foods and calorie-rich options such as noodles, baked potatoes with a generous portion of butter, and spaghetti.



Irene has been cutting back on fried foods, and eating more vegetables and lean meat.



Hensen took a laidback approach when coaching Irene.



“The *SHAPE* makeover has made me realize that it’s all in the mind, and that I need to focus on making small changes instead of expecting drastic results.”

FEEL-GOOD FOOD

“Irene’s diet is extremely high in fat, sugar and carbohydrates, lacking in vegetables and fruit, and her eating times, irregular,” says Lai, who recommended that Irene take baby steps towards improving her diet in the first month of her makeover. “Making a drastic change, such as cutting out her favorite foods completely just wouldn’t make sense and will reduce her chances of sticking with it,” explains Lai.

Her diet prescription: “Irene needs to have her breakfast within an hour of waking up to jump-start her metabolism. By not having breakfast, she’ll end up feeling sluggish and ravenous later in the day.” Instead of cutting out her favorite fast food meals, Lai suggested that Irene go for lower-calorie, nutrition-rich items on the menu such as a cup of Milo and scrambled eggs or corn in place of a Sausage McMuffin and hash brown. “However, I recommend a bowl of oats, low-sugar cereal such as Cornflakes with milk and a piece of fruit, or a slice of wholemeal bread with protein-rich peanut butter.”

For lunch and dinner, Lai suggested that Irene cut back on fried foods and her carbohydrate portions, and up her intake of vegetables and fruit. “She can try starting with a handful of vegetables that she can see herself eating to get used to their taste and textures.”

To minimize her late night binges, Lai proposed that Irene snack on small portions of cereal or fruit every 3-4 hours. “She can have a heavy breakfast and lunch,

“...I still have my *dim sum* sessions, but now, I think before I eat.”

but if Irene’s goal is to lose weight, dinner should be light, such as porridge, or a small portion of rice with vegetables and protein, and she has to replace her soft drinks with at least 2-3 liters of water a day.”

TAKING BABY STEPS

Although the steps Irene took were small and gradual, the changes she experienced were big. “I’ve started cooking again!” she says. “I still don’t like to eat leafy vegetables, but I’ve found that I do like eating other types, my favorite being asparagus. I also like to stir-fry broccoli, baby carrots, bell peppers and button mushrooms with garlic and olive oil,” says the budding cook.

“I still have my *dim sum* sessions, but now, I think before I eat. For example, if I have fried foods in the day, I won’t have any more later. And if I feel like I’ve eaten unhealthy foods, I’ll eat more fruit and vegetables later.” As for fast food, Irene says: “I used to have 3-4 Sausage McMuffins per week. Now, I don’t even remember the last time I had one!”

In addition to revamping her diet, Irene has picked up another healthy habit: Reading food labels. “I do this when I go shopping, and I’ve also started doing my own research on eating healthily on the internet. I find it so interesting that I just can’t seem to stop,” says Irene.

EXERCISE 101



"Irene's busy schedule has been making it difficult for her to fit in exercise, so she needs to find a way to resolve this, even if it means working out outdoors or at home," says personal trainer Erni Hasniza. However, she adds: "Because she's still inexperienced, it's probably a good idea to work out with the supervision of a trainer a little longer so she can master her exercises and execute them with good

form. What Irene needs to do is continue improving her cardiovascular fitness and progress from strengthening her big muscle groups to working her small muscle groups. To build endurance, I recommend brisk walking or light jogging at the gym or outdoors." Erni has designed this strength training workout to target Irene's large muscle groups, and has included simple, alternative moves she can do at home when she isn't able to make it to the gym.

1 Leg press

Sit on the leg press machine with your head and back resting on the padded support. Place your feet on the foot plate at about hip-width apart with your heels flat. Angle your knees at about 90 degrees, making sure they are in line with your feet [A]. Tighten your abdominals and push the platform away with your heels and balls of your feet in a smooth, controlled movement [B], careful not to lock your knees. Return foot plate to starting position. Start with 40kg and 3 sets of 15 reps.



HOME WORKOUT RX: Squats

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and back straight. Slowly squat down until your thighs are almost parallel to the floor. Slowly push yourself back into standing position and repeat. Perform 3 sets of 10-20 reps. To make the squat more challenging, hold a heavy object, such as a large bottle of water, close to your chest while performing this move.



2 Chest press

Sit on the chest press machine with your back straight, abs tightened, chest out and arms at your sides. Load a 10kg weight, then position your elbows at a 90 degree angle [A], grasp the handle bars lightly and push forward slowly [B], careful not to lock your elbows or raise your elbows above your shoulders. Return to starting position and repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps.

HOME WORKOUT RX: Modified push-ups

Position your knees close together on a mat, placing your hands directly under your shoulders. With your abs tightened, lower your upper body by bending your arms to about 90 degrees, keeping your head in line with your spine. Push yourself back up to return to starting position. Start with 1 set of 5-10 reps and work your way up to 2-3 sets as you get stronger.

3 Lat pull-down

Load a 15-20kg weight, then sit yourself down the lat pull-down machine with your hands grasping the handles firmly and placed slightly wider than shoulder-width apart in front of you [A]. While leaning backwards slightly and keeping your back straight and abs tight, pull the bar down [B], hold for 1 count, then release upwards slowly and smoothly without letting go of the bar. Repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps.

HOME WORKOUT RX: Lower-back extension

Lie down on an exercise mat, face down with your arms outstretched in front of you and legs straight. Put your hands behind your ears, elbows bent. Raise your upper body and legs, keeping your movements slow and controlled. Hold for 1 count, then lower to starting position and repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps.



4 Seated abdominal crunch

Sit on the machine with your arms resting on the arm rests from the elbow down and hands lightly grasping the handles [A]. With a 15kg weight loaded and your back straight and fully supported, push your upper body downwards [B], making sure to push from your abdominals, not your arms and shoulders. Release pressure to return to starting position. Repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps.

HOME WORKOUT RX: Sit-ups

Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat and hands behind your ears. Curl your shoulders forward, keeping your lower back on the floor, breathing out as you curl upwards. Breathe in as you lower yourself to starting position. Repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps.

5 Triceps press

Sit on the triceps dip machine with your back straight and upper body leaning forward slightly. Load a 15-20kg weight, then with your abs tightened and shoulders straight, place your hands on the handle bars with your elbows bent [A]. Push down slowly, keeping your arms in a straight line [B], careful not to lock your elbows. Release upwards to return to starting position. Repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps.

HOME WORKOUT RX: Triceps dips

Sit yourself down on a chair or bench. Placing your hands at the front edges of your seat, lift yourself off the chair so that your body is positioned in front of the chair and your arms behind you. Place your feet hip-width apart, keep your back straight and close to the chair, and bend your knees to 90 degrees. Lower yourself until your arms are bent at 90 degrees, then push up until your arms are straight (do this without locking your elbows). Repeat for 3 sets of 15 reps. ■

