

Lower Body Makeover *for Women*

By Joe Franco

When it comes to exercising a specific body part, the lower body is the most in demand for women. I know, because half of my clients are women! There are many movements that can be used, but choosing the most effective ones can be a chore. Shaping up your lower body can be readily accomplished, provided that you are willing to do the work. By targeting the muscles with the right exercises in the right format, results are to follow. Along with proper diet and cardio training are the keys to obtaining the lower body you desire. The following layout is an easy-to-follow but very effective program covering these factors to get you started.

The one concern women still have is the fear of building too much muscle. Therefore, they train half-heartedly and use light weights that do not produce results. The truth is it is really difficult for women to build large muscles. The primary reason is the lack of testosterone. This is a hormone secreted in both male and females, but a woman on average only produces one tenth of what a male does. Hence, muscle growth remains modest as compared to a male.

THE PROGRAM

The following is a targeted lower body routine that will bring results. These routines are designed to work synergistically with each other, by increasing muscular stimulation. This in turn gives you great-looking legs. For the best results, perform the quadriceps routine and the glute/hamstring routine on separate days. This will allow for more recovery. In addition, due to the intensity of each routine I prefer that you do each muscle



group once per week. The routines consist of three exercises that will be supersetted three times. For example, you will do the three exercises one after another with minimal rest. After you complete one superset, you can rest for 30 seconds before you start the second superset.

The rep range of each exercise depends on your specific goals. Whatever the rep range you choose, you still want those last few reps to be a challenge. For more strength and muscle-building, you should stay in the range of 6 to 10 reps per set. If you would like to tone and build endurance, then do 12 to 15 reps per exercise.

QUADRICEPS ROUTINE

1. Front Squat As shown on a PACE machine. It can also be done with a straight bar across your chest. Assume a shoulder-width foot position and lower your body until your thighs are parallel with the floor. Your lower back should be slightly arched throughout the movement and your heels should be on the floor at all times.

2. Walking Lunge Begin by standing upright in an open area with your feet shoulder-width apart. Take a long stride forward with your right leg allowing your opposing knee to drop to the floor without touching the floor. Once you reach parallel with the right leg, spring the left leg forward and repeat. Keep good posture throughout the movement while keeping your head, shoulders, and hips vertically aligned.

3. Split Squat Begin by placing your heels two inches further out from shoulder width and point your toes point outward. You can hold a dumbbell in front for added resistance. Keep your shoulders back and hold a slight arch to your lower back for good posture. Lower your body as you would to sit in a chair. Once you reach the seated position, push back up through your heels.

GLUTE/HAMSTRING ROUTINE.

1. Stiff-legged Dead Lift Stand with your feet just inside shoulder width. Grasp the dumbbells or barbell and keep the weight in front of your body. Keeping your knees slightly bent, slowly lower your upper body at the hips until you feel the stretch on your hamstrings. Again, keep an arch in the lower back with your head up. Once you reach a good stretch, reverse the movement while keeping your glutes in a contraction.

2. Leg Curl As shown on a PACE machine. Start by sitting in a seated leg curl machine and place your feet between the rollers. Slowly press your ankles down until your knees are fully flexed. During the movement focus on the contraction on the hamstrings at the bottom to get the extra squeeze. Then reverse the action by allowing your legs to elevate to the starting position.

3. Abduction Machine As shown on a PACE machine. Begin by having your legs together on the seated abductor machine. Slowly move your legs outwards as far as is comfortable. At end of the movement contract the glute for a two-second count. Then let your legs move back together slowly.

A GOOD DIET GOES A LONG WAY!

By eating a clean diet you are ahead of the game. Here are some simple guidelines to follow to keep the diet clean to increase the results for this program:

- Drink plenty of water, even during your training. For women, try

to drink at least 64 ounces.

- Consume protein with each meal. At least four servings per day.
- Avoid processed foods and simple sugars.
- Don't be afraid to eat healthy fats such as peanuts, almonds and olive oil.
- Eat your vegetables.

DO YOUR CARDIO!

For quick results try higher intensity cardio. This simply increases the rate of losing fat. In addition, it will show off the hard work you put into the leg routine. I prefer walking or running on a treadmill with an elevation while changing speeds every two minutes. Most treadmills have interval-training programs. Your fitness level will determine the speed of the treadmill but still have the treadmill elevated. The incline forces your legs to lift your body weight against gravity, which builds and strengthens the targeted muscle groups of the lower body. For beginners start with three times per week by doing 20-minute sessions. A more advanced exerciser can try four times per week at 30 minutes.



Joe Franco is a personal trainer and owner of two fitness businesses. He started F.I.T. personal training over 8 years ago and also owns a 30-minute women's fitness center called Working Out Women in Holland, Bucks County. Through his education -- bachelor's degree in exercise science -- and certification through ACE, he has dedicated his life to fitness. Joe specializes in motivation with a unique variation of exercise programs. Contact joe franco@phillyfit.com