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## The ultimate no fluff women's training guide

Photo by standret. For as long as I can remember, I wanted to develop abs that were noticeable. It spread to society's symbol of fitness, having the defined abs look is, for most, an elusive goal. As superficial as it sounds, I've longed for this look for a very long time. In fact, I regularly write get noticeable abs on my annual target list, as if it's something I can just go out to the store and purchase. As every year wraps, I'm slapped in the face by the palm of frustration - despite my best efforts, I constantly failed to get the stomach I've always wanted. Over the last year and a half, I did a full review when it came to my diet and training regimen. I built about five pounds of muscle during the year while cutting down on fat, which I attributed to consistent training, calculating macros, and counting calories using Myfitnesspal. I saw transformative effects with my upper body: more definition, more vascularity, and improved strength and muscle endurance. Both photos were taken in May 2020 and the answer is yes, this is a random door behind me in the picture to the right. Here's the thing - I trained my core in exactly the same way as my upper body, but my results weren't nearly the same. When I step on my belly with my fingers, I can feel the muscles underneath... But these muscles are buried under a small layer of fat. Although I was able to stimulate my stomach and perfect my oblique muscles, I have found it almost impossible to get rid of this annoying belly fat. It's like the worst hide-and-seek game ever... My abs always throw me a big F-you. You can scoff and decide not to read the rest of the post (I understand it, it may seem superficial), but you have to explain some fundamental truths when it comes to achieving a six-pack as a woman. From my personal experience, there's nothing more daunting than feeling like you're doing everything right just for your efforts to be questionable. In this post, I want to refer to some truths about the six-pack look at women, outline my current training plan, and discuss the results achieved. He also approached the Pro Physique Coach and YouTuber Paul Revelia who has provided valuable insights from the point of view of a certified professional. My training ethos is that there is not a one size fits all strategy to achieve the results you want. I'm a non-disabled cis and what works for me can't work for others. Experimentation and consistent effort over long periods of time are two of the main components of how I achieved results. That said, I encourage you to be open to trial and error, and if part of this post resonates with you, feel free to use it in your own routine. Before I get into the shape of my training, I want to set the scene with some cleaning. First... There's so much. Many. and video to achieve a six-pack that is tailored around cis men. I've had a really hard time discovering valuable training and nutrition tips that specifically target cis women like me. Men usually have more testosterone, can build muscle faster, have less body fat, and take a different path - both in terms of convenience and strategy - to achieve a sculptural look. Women tend to carry more body fat. Of course, there are exceptions and reservations that need to be addressed in these statements. Through a strategy lens, there are also differences in the way men and women are best trained. I'm not going to go into too much detail here, but Article 9 Reasons why women shouldn't train like men provides some really good insight. Menno writes: Most women are intuitively aware of their strengths in the gym, but are often told to train like men. As a result, they do not fulfill their sporting potential. Women are of course much more inclined to do steady cardio, lift at a more controlled rate, perform higher repetitions, take shorter rest periods and do more overall work. The main point here is that it is important to recognize that the road to your health and fitness goals will not always be parallel to the path that most men take. I was definitely discouraged and confused as to why I couldn't get what some would refer to as washboard abs. After sifting through all my health and fitness resources, and spending hours skimming YouTube videos, I realized it wasn't just my fitness routine that was posing difficulties - it was also my body type. We all store fat in different places in our bodies. Some women carry weight on the bottom of their body, some in their arms, and for me - I have fat in my chest and stomach area. That said, when I intensified my workout routine, I noticed that my arms and legs were the first to stimulate. Despite working throughout my body, I was seeing little progress with the extra weight in my stomach. My legs and arms got more frugal, my boobs shrunk a little (wah), but my body fat took out a second mortgage on my stomach... We've been at it for a long time. Unfortunately for us, and despite how targeted training we do, weight loss is not à la carte. We can't choose exactly where in our bodies we want to lose fat. The fact is, if To get the shredded look, we need to get our body fat down. In the experience of Paul Revelia, he notes that: For women to get on the more frugal side, it requires getting about 15-17% body fat, while for men, you need to get off at about 10% to see their abs, for the most part. If women get below the 10% mark, that look is extremely shredded. We need a diet formula + training + loss enough body fat for muscles to show. But, what I'm trying to say here is that some women achieve noticeable abs before others based on their genetic make-up. Make-up, the fitness journey is different, so don't be discouraged if you feel like others around you can make faster progress. Now that I've laid some of the foundations, we can get into some training methods that I've used to build muscle around my core area and strategies around nutrition and nutrition strategies that helped me trim down the fat around my core. In the article How I physically transformed my body composition in 1 year, I outlined a detailed strategy on how to change my physique by breaking up my training splits and diet plan. If you haven't read it, I recommend starting from there as an institution and weaving your way back into this article. Don't worry - I'll put a bookmark in place for you. For me to provide advice moving forward, I want to first acknowledge some of the misunderstandings around weight loss that I previously believed and acted on. Naive and foolish, I used to try to work my abs every day doing very high reps and I never felt anything. On the reverse of this, I've also tried doing ab work randomly/ every time I felt like this... that almost never was. Spoiler alert: None of these strategies worked (go format). After learning about other fitness regimens, I was inspired to try new core exercises and programming - which proved sustainable, effective, and enjoyable (well, kind of enjoyable... is still ab work). Now I consistently train my abs twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) and will choose 5-6 different exercises per session. Each session will last about 30 minutes or so. That's it, that's it. That's it, that's it. That's all he wrote on my abs. But don't just take it from me. In Paul's video Six Pack Abs for Women, he states that the core is a muscle stabilizer and will work automatically while you're training other parts of the body. He recommends compiling abs about two to three days a week, max. To achieve week-over-week growth, we applied the principle of progressive overload, making each session more difficult by adding more weight, taking less rest, and/or doing more repetitions. For example, I'll add elevated weights (sometimes a kettlebell) when I'm performing Russian twists and lateral turns. Buying 1.5-pound ankle weights was also a great investment and has boosted the intensity of my workouts. The combination of core exercises will include each session targeting a medley of different areas - oblique, upper abs, lower abs, and middle abs. Each week, I'll try to keep things fresh by mixing up my training range or introducing a new exercise to the line-up. For every exercise, I'll aim for 8-15 reps. Although this is a medium range, sometimes it will go as high as 20+ reps during the first circuit, and then drop down to 8-12 reps during the last half of the set. I repeat every exercise three times. I've been stuck in this training separation for over a year but it wasn't until the six-month mark when I started to really notice a change and started seeing the definition in my oblique and abdominal muscles. I'm the somewhat gal who likes details and depth, so I've provided a snapshot of what my core training plan looks like. Here's what I've planned for this week: Tuesday YouTube video Intense 5 minutes at home Abs & lex their Workout (warm-up) Exercises include: Lying Foot raises Suitcases Russ twists (w/20-pound weights) Bike Crunches Starfish Crunch (holding 2.5-pound weights) Thursday YouTube video Intense 5 -Minute Middle Abs (warm-up) Followed by the following exercises: Side Bends (w/50-pound weights) Flutter Kicks C-Sit Hold Toe Touch Reverse Crunches Cardio Says some lucky people can get away with incorporating only strength training and healthy eating to lose stomach weight. The majority of us have to incorporate some kind of cardio. Based on my experience, cardio speeds up the process while also allowing me to eat more during the day. Let's say, for example, I burn 500 calories on my daily journey. This means I can eat another 500 calories above my calorie deficit (which I will describe in the following section) on that particular day. Mom loves to eat, so Mom does the cardio. In a previous article I (listed above), I detailed the cardio routine I perform regularly. I've included below for ease of reference: Monday - Steady state running 8km/5 mile run (outdoor or treadmill) Tuesday - High intensity treadmill training interval 8km/5 mile run Wednesday - Steady state run (lowest day km usually 5-7km) Thursday - High intensity training treadmill 10km/6.25 mile run Friday - Steady state running 8k run (outdoor or treadmill) run Saturday - High intensity treadmill training interval 8km/5 mile run Sunday - Slow long run (+10k/6.25 miles) Running is my number one priority (and love). Sometimes, when I've finished my ab circuit, I notice that my legs can get a little sore, which can block my rhythm. If you find yourself in the same boat, then I recommend sticking to low intensity, stable cardio status after completing your core training. You want to ensure that you give your feet a break, but still welcome to your daily cardio. One of the biggest mistakes I made was intuitively eating without monitoring my calorie intake. I'm not trying to punish anyone who follows food intuitively, because it works for a lot of people. It just doesn't work for me. As soon as I started watching everything I was putting into my body, I realized That I was on a calorie surplus on days, despite healthy eating and clean more than 80% of the time. I think this is a general mistake that many of us make. I'll be the first to admit that calorie counting can be tedious. Fortunately, Myfitnesspal makes it easy. If you are a creature of habit and find yourself eating the same (or small variations variations meals, then you can manually import this file into the application and save it for future use. Namely, you should enter the meal only once! Once I started tracking my calories, I bought a cheap food scale to help me count my portion sizes. After many food weigh-ins, day after day, I gained the ability to portion eye bulb accurately. This can be an extremely valuable way to quantify what you eat every day, but it's important to flag that you don't have to be extreme with it. My friend's aunt, for example, will count every piece of food she consumes. I'm talking about measuring the circumference of her apple. For me, a rough estimate is enough. Let's go to math. With an initial body weight of 140 lbs, you first need to figure out the calories you need to consume in order to lose body fat. To lose 1£1 a week in an active lifestyle, you would have to consume 1,600 calories - which includes any calories that may have been burned by exercise. This, by the way, can be calculated automatically in most calorie tracking apps. 1-1.5 lb/week is manageable. 2 pounds or more is aggressive, and for the most part, not recommended. I focused on getting ~120-140g of protein per day. Then I separated my fats and carbohydrates from there. The formula I used to calculate protein was taken by YouTuber and fitness expert Mike Thurston's video: Current weight (63 kg) x 2g protein = ~126g protein per day. My current macro breakdown that I aim for is ~35% protein/40% carbohydrates/25% fats. I work better with higher carbohydrates, perhaps attributed to the heavy cardio I do on a daily basis, while others work better with higher fats. I would encourage you to experiment with your macros and see what works best for you while keeping in mind your mood and energy levels. Here's a quick snapshot of a day in the life of my macro analyses: Ignore the "target" column. Screenshot from the author. During work days, I eat at a deficit, and on weekends, I do refeed days where I'll be in surplus 1-2 days a week (Saturday and/or Sunday). I found this play for me. I am still able to make progress without feeling deprived and hungry all the time. If I eat in a deficit for too many consecutive days, then I am at the mercy of low energy and low moods. Compromising my mental health isn't worth it. The key takeaway is to experiment with your macro cleavage, avoid aggressive weight loss goals (+2lb per and look at calorie monitoring to keep yourself on the right track and accountable. Abs made in the kitchen I'm sure you've heard this slogan pumped from every gym blog, video, or influencer's mouth. In fact, when I first dropped this article subject to my sister, her immediate response was reciting this same exaggerated phrase. I do not completely reject this philosophy, as definitely worth it, but I think it's important to recognize that despite the discipline with your calorie intake and despite how healthy you eat, abs aren't just one more cabbage salad away. At the end of the day, you should be in a calorie deficit for a long enough time to reduce your body fat for abs to show. But, you should also simultaneously train your abs and build muscles in your core (just like any other part of the body) in order for your abs to be felt. For some (myself included), you need to cross some mental barriers to get your body fat to a level to get that shredded look and for some, it's just not worth it. A warning When I was at university in my second year, I developed an eating disorder. I became obsessed with my diet, not allowing myself to consume sugar, fat, or alcohol. On average, I was consuming less than 50g of carbohydrates a day and was instead indulging in heavily processed foods such as sugar-free yogurt, diet pop, etc. I worked six days a week and sometimes I used to frequent the gym twice a day. If I slipped and had a meal of deceit, I punished myself for days. Staying in this shape for months, I lost a lot of weight, but I found that my mental health suffered greatly. My body then began to send clear signs that my current treatment was disrupting my hormonal process. I stopped getting my menstrual cycle and felt constantly lethargic. Month after month passed until I reached a full year without getting my period. Something was wrong. Amenorrhea is a condition where you have lost your menstrual cycle for an extended period of time. It can be caused by a multitude of factors (most often pregnancy), but it can also occur during rapid weight loss, new eating habits or exercise regimens, and low body fat. You may think that losing your period sounds like a dream (adios bitches), but in fact, it means you may be in a dangerous position. Amenorrhea can lead to infertility, hair loss, and osteoporosis, among other problems. I am so happy that I have escaped this nightmare and allowed myself to relax, enjoy cheat meals, and live an overall healthier lifestyle that allows me to live. But I know firsthand how easy it is to slip back into this obsessive behavior. Paul also recommends using a diet break: As you get more frugal, stress becomes more impactful. When you're really lean, the levels may remain chronic high and leptin may be low which can have long-term effects. He recommends using a diet break where you can bring calories back up to maintenance, reduce cardio, and focus more on recovery (based on maintenance). The result is to remain more

frugal through the use of adjustments during this period. After dropping the old routine of doing abs almost never (LOL), adopting the 2x per week plan, and following my diet plan for about a year, here's my abs 1/2x per month/never, eats intuitively, and doesn't count my macros. December 2018Current physiqueA year since adopting the protocol 2x per week ab and monitoring my calories + macros. May 2020Sensitive though it seems and feels impossible, developing abs is definitely possible for most women-although it will come easier for some than others based on many factors. Abs will come with consistent training over time (not overtraining), applying progressive overload, and eating into a calorie deficit for long, prolonged periods of time. The formula is a combination of muscle building and fat loss, but it is important to enjoy the process. Of course, it takes discipline to achieve your fitness goals, but that doesn't mean corruption. What helped me become more aware of my mental health along my fitness journey is to monitor my energy level and moods and see how my calorie intake and macro divisions affect this. Listen to your body and make sure that any plan you undertake is safe and healthy for you. If the abs are your ultimate goal, great, but make sure the way to achieve these results is not harmful. You can do that! To track my progress or any follow-up questions with this post (or others), you can connect with me on Instagram. Instagram.

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