

get strong, sexy thighs

Three simple moves that will help you slim and sculpt your legs (in just minutes a day). BY STACY WHITMAN

THIS MONTH'S GOAL

Take a break from traditional squats to get trimmer, more toned legs.

Why these moves work

The secret to slimming your thighs *fast* is boosting the intensity of your lower-body workout. Instead of increasing the weight or reps, these exercises up the ante by working one leg at a time and adding balance training. Do them at the gym or in your living room (see "Do These at Home Too!" page 150) and in 30 days you'll have va-va-voom legs that you'll want to show off well into the fall.

Muscle mechanics

The quadriceps (or quads) consist of four muscles that run along the front of your thigh. The **rectus femoris**, the large muscle in the center of your upper leg, attaches at your pelvis and kneecap. It flexes your hip and extends your knee. The three vasti muscles — the **lateralis** and **medialis** (on either side of the knee) and the **intermedius** (beneath the rectus femoris) — connect at the top of your thighbone and your knee, and also help extend your leg.

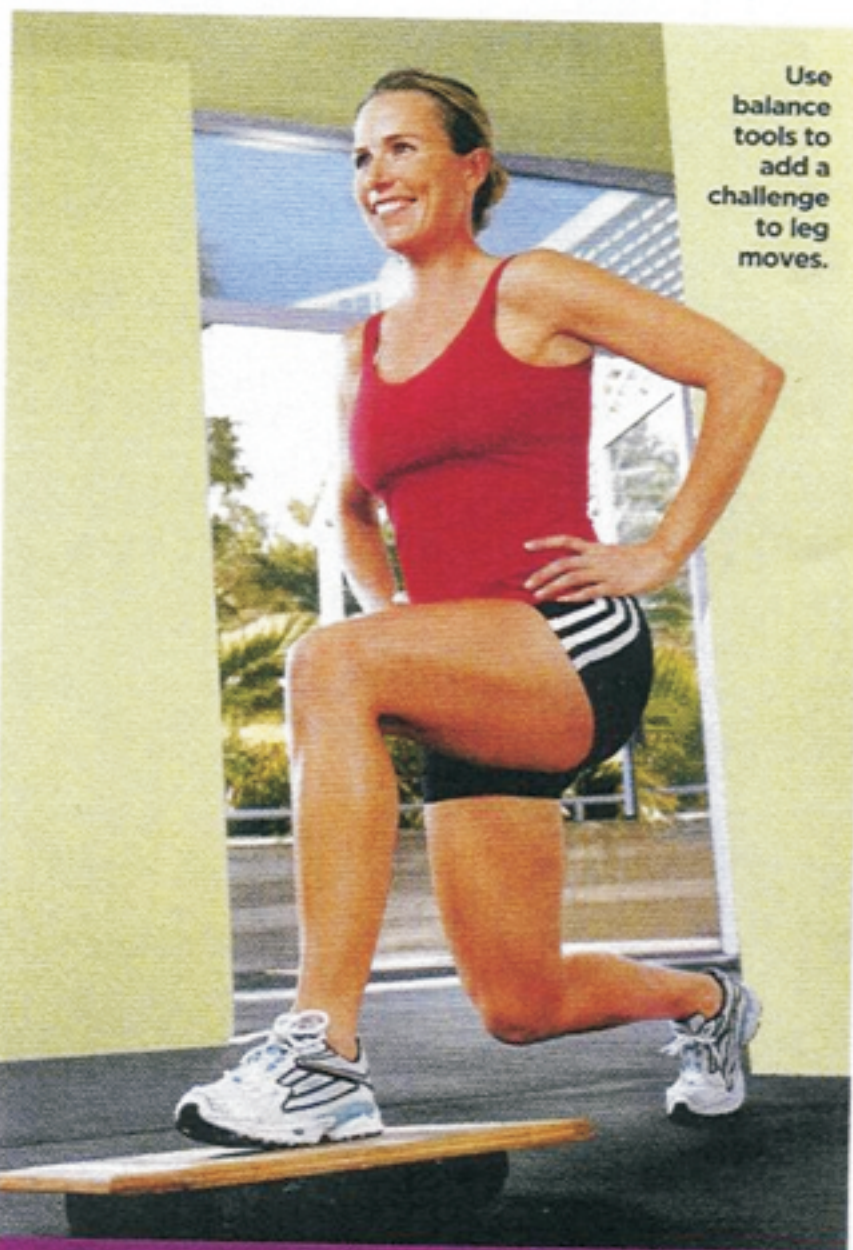


MUSCLES TARGETED

1. rectus femoris
2. vastus lateralis
3. vastus medialis
4. vastus intermedius

Details

You'll need a stability ball, a balance board and a leg-press machine. Warm up with 5 minutes of easy cardio, then do 2 or 3 sets of 12–15 reps of each exercise, resting 30–45 seconds between sets (beginner/intermediate level). Finish by stretching your quads. Do these moves twice a week.



SHAPE READER MODEL Amy Stec, 37, runs for 45 minutes four times a week and strength trains twice a week. "These moves looked simple at first, but they were surprisingly tough, especially the one on the balance board," she says. "I really had to focus on tightening my core and thighs to keep myself from falling off of it." The mother of two lives in Moorpark, Calif.



TRAINER'S STRATEGY ▶ To firm up your legs, you need to work them hard with strength training (gradually adding weight and intensity) and burn off the extra fat that can hide muscles, says Rod Johnson, owner of Seal of Fitness, a private training center in Atlanta, who designed this workout. ▶ The bottom line Pairing these moves with cardio activities that challenge your quads — such as stair climbing, running and cycling — will help you get leaner, more defined legs faster.