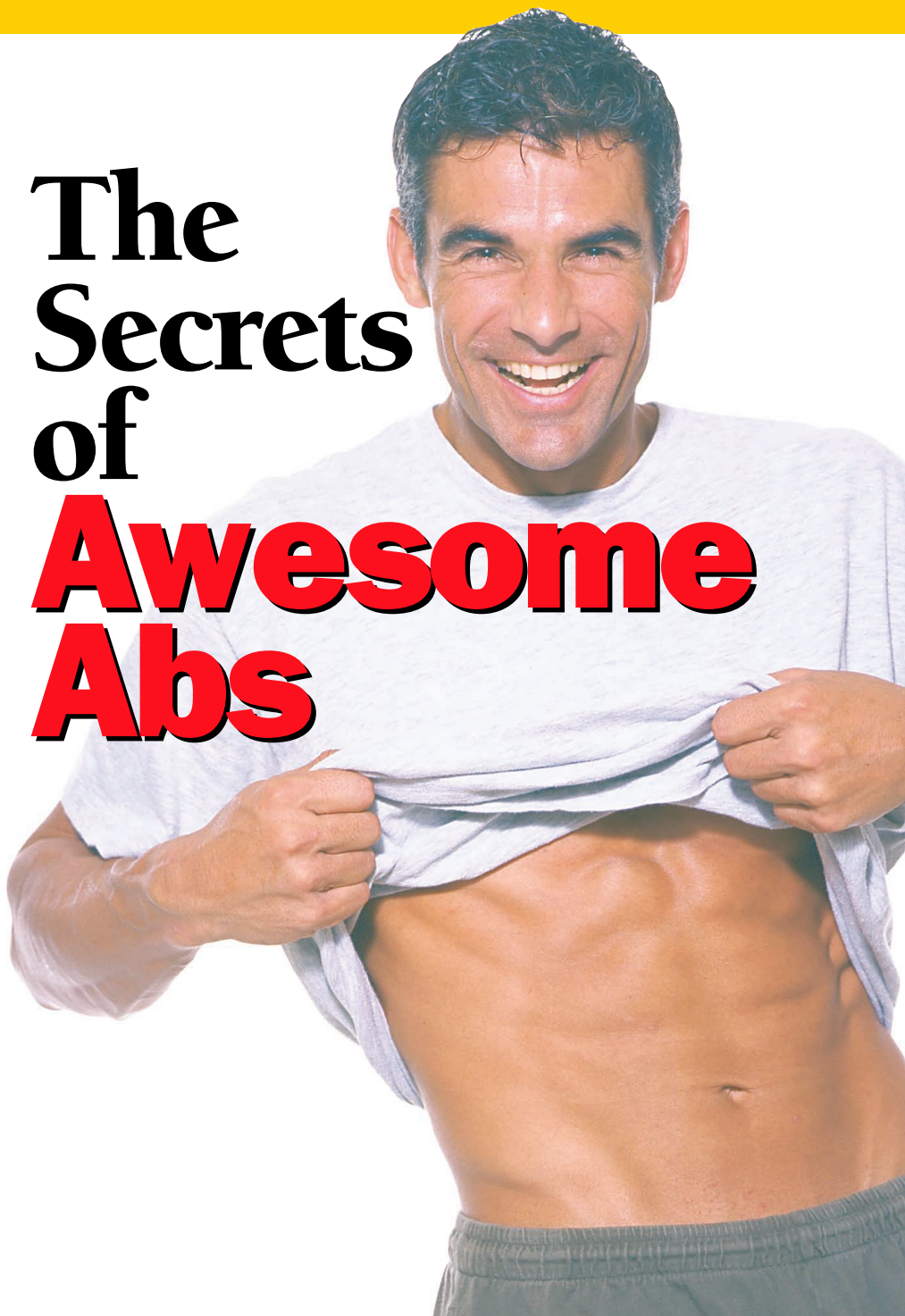


Men's Health Special Power Report

**The
Secrets
of
Awesome
Abs**



4 Weeks to a Flat Front

The no-brainer plan to lose your gut—fast

Not all weight-training systems burn fat, but the one you'll use in this program burns fat by the pound. Here's why: Since a 1990 study in *The Journal of Applied Physiology*, exercise scientists have known that doing hard, 10-repetition sets and following them with short rest periods produces dramatic increases in growth hormone. Growth hormone plays a huge role in muscle building. In fact, a recent study found that growth-hormone increases accounted for 50 percent of the muscle growth in trained weight lifters during a 20-week program.

But growth hormone doesn't just build up muscles. It also obliterates flab by making your fat cells smaller, according to exercise physiologist William J. Kraemer, Ph.D., who worked on the studies mentioned above. This is what happens: During exercise, growth hormone takes fat out of your fat cells and makes your body use it for energy. Thus, the fat cells in your belly shrink because you're treating them like propane to fuel your workout.

Our diet plan, designed by Susan M. Kleiner, Ph.D., author of *Power Eating*, helps you eat the right foods at the right times to capitalize on the exercise program.

Put the plans together, and you could lose up to 1 percentage point of body fat each week and see results just 9 days into the program. After 4 weeks you should be much trimmer. After that, take a week off. Then do it all over again for another 4 weeks.

The Workouts

The Weight-Lifting Program

The two total-body weight workouts you'll do are adapted from the program used in a 1990 Penn State study on growth hormone. Here are a few particulars.

► **Sets and repetitions:** Do three sets of 10 repetitions of each exercise.

► **Exercise groups:** The exercises are grouped in pairs. You'll alternate between those exercises, doing one set of one exercise, then one set of the other, until you've done three sets of each. Then you'll move on to the next group.

► **Rest:** Your goal is to rest 60 seconds after every set of every exercise. (In an exercise pair, you rest between exercises, rather than going straight from one to the other as you would in a superset.) You may need up to 90 seconds of rest at first, but try to whittle that down each time you work out.

► **Weights:** For the first set of each exercise, choose the heaviest weight you think you can use for 10 repetitions with perfect form. Decrease the weight on subsequent sets if you need to.

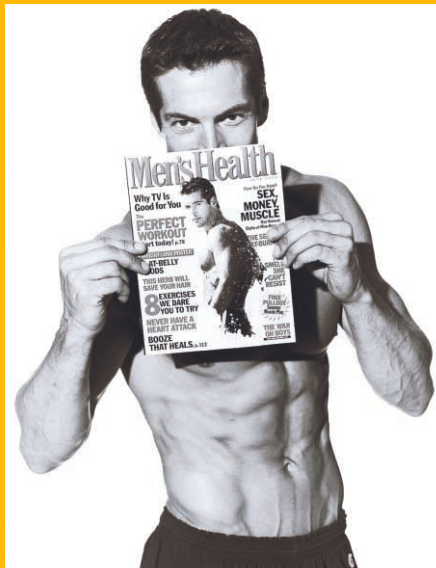
► **Progress:** Try to work with more weight on your first set of each exercise each week. Aim for a 5 percent increase each week.

The Cardiovascular/Sprint Program

You'll do two types of aerobic exercise—steady-state and interval workouts—and you'll also do sprints, an anaerobic exercise. The intensity of the aerobic workouts is dictated by your maximum heart rate (MHR), which is

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Ab Tips from a Top Model



Robert Goold, *Men's Health* cover model

Age: 39

Most recent cover: June 2000

A surfer, beach-volleyball player, and triathlete, Goold works hard in the gym three times a week. But he prefers the fresh air. “My favorite part is that euphoric feeling”—the endorphin release that follows a long run, swim, or bike ride, he says.

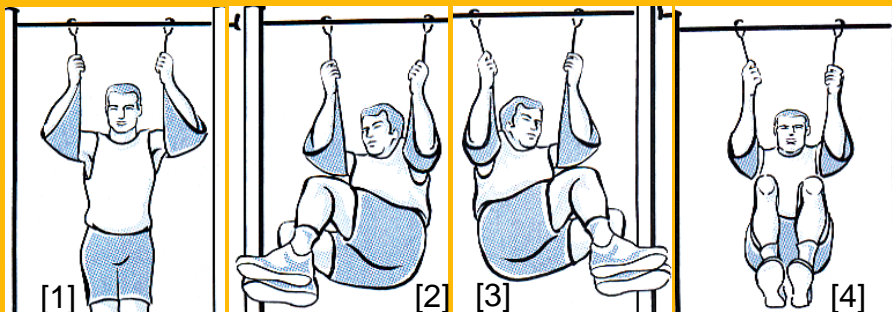
In the gym, Goold looks for exercises and routines that help him maintain his athleticism. He usually super-sets upper-body exercises for opposing muscle groups—a chest exercise followed immediately by a back exercise, for example.

He tries to maintain tension on the muscle throughout each exercise. If he

has a weight in his hands, he wants his muscles to feel as if they're flexing. “I think you get results a lot quicker if you maintain that resistance,” he says.

It's hard to argue that point. “People ask me how old I am, and they can't believe I'm 39,” he says. “I look at them and I think, ‘If you'd just stayed consistent....’ I think that's the key.”

Robert's Hanging Knee Raises



Goold's favorite abdominal workout is with Ab-OrigInals elbow-supporting straps, which hang from a pullup bar [1].

He starts with hanging oblique crunches [2, 3], and after 10 repetitions to each side, switches to hanging knee raises [4]. (Check out www.aboriginals.com.)

Your Workout Calendar

WORKOUTS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Week 1	Weight workout A: Bench press, squat. Cable row, leg extension. Military press, bent-knee incline situp. Biceps curl, standing calf raise.	Interval training: 7 or 8 1-minute intervals, each followed by 2 minutes of recovery	Weight workout B: Lat pulldown, lying leg curl. Dip, leg press. Lateral raise, back extension. Dumbbell shrug, reverse crunch.
Week 2	Weight workout B, followed by 15–20 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise	Interval training: 9 or 10 1-minute intervals, each followed by 2 minutes of recovery	Weight workout A
Week 3	Weight workout A, followed by 20–25 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise	Interval training: 6 or 7 1½-minute intervals, each followed by 3 minutes of recovery	Weight workout B
Week 4	Weight workout B, followed by 20–25 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise	Interval training: 8 or 9 1½-minute intervals, followed by 3 minutes of recovery	Weight workout A, followed by 20–25 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise

approximately 220 minus your age. You can do any type of aerobic exercise—running, swimming, cycling, rowing, stairclimbing, inline skating. For the sprints, stick to running.

- ▶ For steady-state exercise, work at 70 percent of your MHR.
- ▶ In the first 2 weeks of interval workouts, warm up for 5 minutes at an easy

Your Meal Plan

MEALS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Breakfast	Bagel with butter Glass of fat-free milk Banana	Eggs Toast with butter Banana	Cottage cheese English muffin with butter Grapes
Snack 1	Fruit juice Pretzels	Fruit juice Graham crackers	Fruit juice Low-fat pudding or gelatin
Snack 2	Grapes	Dried apricots	Apple
Lunch	Spaghetti and meatballs Italian bread	Roast-beef sandwich Carrot sticks	Turkey sandwich with lettuce and tomato Cucumber salad
Snacks and shakes	Preworkout snack: Fat-free milk and low-fat cookies Postworkout shake	Preworkout snack: Low-fat flavored yogurt Postworkout shake	Preworkout snack: Fat-free milk, crackers, peanut butter Postworkout shake
Dinner	Grilled or broiled chicken breast Mixed-green salad with fat-free dressing Low-fat ice cream	Cheese quesadillas Mixed-green salad with fat-free dressing	Fish sticks Potato salad Low-fat ice cream

	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	No exercise	Weight workout A , followed by 15–20 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise	Sprints: 8 at 10 seconds each	No exercise
	No exercise	Weight workout B , followed by 15–20 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise	Sprints: 10 at 10 seconds each	No exercise
	No exercise	Weight workout A , followed by 20–25 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise	Sprints: 12 at 10 seconds each	No exercise
	No exercise	Weight workout B , followed by 20–25 minutes of steady-state cardiovascular exercise	Sprints: 14 at 10 seconds each	No exercise

pace, then do 1 minute of exercise at 85 to 90 percent of your MHR, followed by 2 minutes of recovery at 60 percent. During the second 2 weeks, you'll warm up, then do intervals of 1½ minutes at 85 to 90 percent, followed by 3 minutes of recovery at 60 percent of your MHR. The workout calendar will tell you how many intervals to do. Always finish with a 5-minute cooldown at an easy pace.

	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	Bran cereal with fat-free milk Banana	Bagel with cream cheese Orange	Pancakes with butter and syrup Orange	Low-fat frozen waffles with butter Banana
	Fruit juice Low-fat brownie	Fruit juice Fat-free chips with salsa	Fruit juice Hard-boiled egg	Fruit juice Low-fat chips with salsa
	Pear	Apple	Pear	Cantaloupe
	Tuna sandwich Tomato-cucumber salad	Cheese-and-vegetable pizza	Grilled cheese sandwich with tomatoes	Homemade cheese-and-mushroom pizza on Boboli bread
	Cashews	Preworkout snack: Fat-free milk, cashews Postworkout shake	Preworkout snack: Low-fat flavored yogurt Postworkout shake	Blueberries (fresh or frozen) with low-fat ice cream
	Steak and baked potato with fat-free sour cream Tossed salad with fat-free dressing Low-fat ice cream	Shrimp over pasta with tomato sauce Mixed-green salad with fat-free dressing Sherbet	Grilled sirloin burger Grilled zucchini and corn Fruit salad	Grilled swordfish on skewers with grapes and bell peppers Rice Italian ice

► Your sprints will last 10 seconds each, followed by 50 seconds of rest. Always start and finish your sprint workouts with 5 minutes of easy jogging.

The Food

The meal plan on pages 10-11 gives you a week's worth of simple meals. Each weekday is equivalent to any other weekday, so if Monday's meals turn your crank better than Wednesday's, you can eat Monday's twice a week for the 4 weeks. But note that the weekend meals have more calories, so don't give yourself a week of Sundays.

The Secret of 6-Pack Abs

To make your abs look like speed bumps, it takes more than crunches. You need to do exercises that incorporate added resistance or that extend your abdominals' range of motion, says Michael Mejia, C.S.C.S., a trainer in New York City. Here are two exercises that do both at the same time.

Angled Reverse Crunch



Lie on a slant board with your head near the top of the board. Place a medicine ball between your knees [A]. Lift your legs and bring your knees toward your chest [B]. Return to the starting position. Do three sets of 10 to 12 repetitions. At home, you can do the same exercise on the floor; try using a phone book.

Weighted Exercise-Ball Crunch



Lie with your back on an exercise ball and your feet planted in front of you. Rest a dumbbell (start with 10 pounds) on your upper chest, right under your chin [A]. Crunch your abdominals as you lift your shoulder blades as high off the ball as you can [B]. Hold for a second, then return to the starting position. Do three sets of 10 to 12 crunches. If you can't do that many with a dumbbell, start without weights, holding your hands behind your ears. No ball? Put a rolled-up towel under the small of your back.

► **Serving sizes:** The bigger you are, the more food you're going to need. So eat enough at each meal to feel full, and let the exercise plan do the rest.

► **Snacks:** Eat snacks 1 and 2 whenever you like during the day. Eat the pre-workout snack 2 hours before exercise, and have Kleiner's postworkout muscle-building shake as soon as possible afterward. To make the postworkout shake, throw the following items into a blender and whip until smooth: 8 oz fat-free milk, 1 packet Carnation Instant Breakfast, 1 banana, and 1 Tbsp peanut butter.

► **Water:** Water will help you work out longer and harder, wash away the bad stuff that accumulates in your muscles after exercise, and even help your liver take your stored fat and put it to use for energy. Drink it all day, every day. Include at least one glass with every meal and snack.

If you really want to etch an impressive midsection, think of your abs as having two distinct sections. Crunches are fine for the top half, but to define what's below the waistband, you need exercises that focus on the hip flexors and the lower half of the rectus abdominis. Add these moves to your workout routine to develop an even tighter, stronger middle.

Incline Leg Raise with a Pulse-Up



Lie on a slant board with your hands gripping the handles behind your head [A]. Slowly raise your legs until they form a 90-degree angle with your torso [B]. Next, lift your legs toward the ceiling in a controlled pulsing motion; your tailbone should rise an inch or two off the board [C]. Finish by lowering your legs slowly. Do three sets of 10 to 12 repetitions.

Seated Jackknife



Sit on the edge of a sturdy chair or bench, holding the seat behind you for support. Extend your legs in front of you, knees slightly bent [A]. Now simultaneously raise your legs toward your chest and bring your chest toward your knees [B]. Do three sets of as many repetitions as you can manage. A couple of caveats: Do this exercise at the end of your workout, when your muscles are thoroughly warm, and be sure to stretch your hamstrings between sets. The more limber these muscles are, the harder you'll be able to work your abs.