

These are...

# THE BEST DAMN EXERCISES EVER INVENTED



We've asked the experts, we've done the research, now we've cracked the code. Gentlemen, we present the ultimate exercises for your **abs**, **shoulders**, **chest**, **legs**, **arms** and **back**. It's the mother of all workouts

Photography Adrian Weinbrecht Words Ray Klerck, Dan Rookwood

**W**hat do you suppose goes on at *Men's Health* Towers? You probably imagine that we're all gently bouncing around on a combination of Swiss balls and creatine-laced green tea, exchanging emails about the latest cable-fly techniques and how much we can bench these days. We're sorry to shatter the allusion but no, normally we don't do anything of the sort. This month, however, we have reverted to stereotype to bring you the definitive exercise regime for total body fitness.

Look again at the headline above. That's right: the best damn exercises ever invented. (Bounce, bounce). We

mean it. (Sip, sip). A hell of a claim, isn't it? (Mmmm... Creatine!) Well, we're so stacked after working all this out, we dare you to argue. But if you can incorporate these exercises into your training, we guarantee you'll agree.

Your challenge, should you choose to accept it, is this: for one month, assign a muscle group to each day of the week Monday-Saturday and do a 45-minute work-out, as we've indicated. Stick to it, gradually building the intensity, and by the time the next issue of *Men's Health* comes out, we can safely say that you'll be in dramatically better shape. Write to us at [www.menshealth.co.uk/bestexercises](http://www.menshealth.co.uk/bestexercises) and let us know how you get on with following the routine and getting results.

# Abs

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Our chosen abs expert is Paul Collins, author of *How To Lose Your Love Handles*. Here are Collins' gems

**1 The move** Abdominal bracing  
**Muscles worked** Abs, TVA

**How to do it** Get on your knees, bwoy. Draw your belly button inwards towards your spine while keeping your back straight. "Locking up the transverse abdominals (TVA)", as it's termed in fancy academic journals. Take deep breaths through your nose and out your mouth, holding the position. Repeat five times.  
**What does it do?** Helps build core stability, improve posture and prevent backache. And justifies all that posing in the mirror.

**2 The move** Hanging knee raise  
**Muscles worked** Lower abs  
**How to do it** Hang from a pull-up bar with an overhand grip, arms shoulder-width apart. With feet together, use your abdominal muscles to raise your feet in an arc, until they're in line with your hands. Pause at the top of the movement and

slowly lower your feet. Do two sets of 10 reps. As you get good at it, hook a light dumb-bell between your ankles. Ouch.  
**What does it do?** Forces the lower abs into definition. It also helps stabilise your pelvis, reducing the risk of hip-knack in later life. You'll save the NHS thousands. Not that the NHS will exist by then. Political commentary *and* abs advice? You don't get this on Jade Goody's workout DVD.

**3 The move** Lateral fly  
**Muscles worked** Obliques – the muscles either side of your sixpack  
**How to do it** Lie on your right side and prop up your upper body on your right elbow with your forearm on the ground. With feet together, lift your pelvis to create a straight line from feet to head. Raise a weight in your left hand until it's parallel to your shoulders. Pause then lower. Alternate on the other side with sets of 10 reps, adding

weight as the month goes on.  
**What does it do?** Gives you a balanced centre of gravity, which means you won't fall into that old biddy when the bus lurches.

**4 The move** Body dish  
**Muscles worked** TVA and obliques  
**How to do it** Assume the Arjen Robben position: lie on your back, arms and legs stretched out. Lock up the TVA. With hands together and feet together, bring your arms and legs towards each other. Pause when both are about 35 degrees from the floor. No need for a protractor, the pain barometer will do. Release to the start position but don't let your hands or feet touch the floor. Do sets of 10 reps.  
**What does it do?** As well as being a mean dancefloor move, this conditions your upper and lower body to work as a unit, improving co-ordination and reducing the risk of hurting your spine. ►



# Shoulders

Certified strength and conditioning specialist Richard Levy has provided our top four shoulder exercises. Do two sets of 10 for each one



**1** **The move** Shrug  
**Muscles worked** Trapezius  
**How to do it** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart holding a dumb-bell in each hand. Keep your back straight and raise your shoulders as high towards your ears as possible, like you're a disgusted José Mourinho demonstrably remonstrating with the fourth official. An overcoat and down-turned pouting mouth are both optional. Pause at the top of the movement and tense your neck muscles. Then slowly lower the weights back to the start position.  
**What does it do?** Gets you fined by the FA. And it stops you getting neck-knack by strengthening the muscles leading into the back of your head.

**2** **The move** Bent over lateral raise  
**Muscles worked** Rear deltoids  
**How to do it** Get yourself some dumb-bells and crouch with your knees together. Lean forward, doubled up like you're backing out last night's curry. Push your abs onto your thighs with your chest raised and hands at your ankles. Raise the dumb-bells so they're level with your shoulders, pause and slowly lower to the starting position. Keep a straight back throughout the movement.  
**What does it do?** It works the often forgotten muscles that keep your shoulders back and in the correct posture.

**3** **The move** Front raise  
**Muscles worked** Upper chest, front deltoids  
**How to do it** Stand with your feet about 30cm apart and hold a light dumb-bell in each hand, arms at your sides and palms towards you. Keeping your arms straight, slowly raise the weights out in front of you until they're parallel to the floor, simultaneously rotating your wrists until your palms face downwards. Pause, then slowly reverse the movement.  
**What does it do?** It hits the middle and front of your shoulders, giving you the V-shape, which makes your waist look narrower. And it means you can do the dance from the *Thriller* video.

**4** **The move** Shoulder press  
**Muscles worked** Entire shoulders  
**How to do it** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, holding a dumb-bell in each hand. Keep your knees slightly bent. Raise the weights so they are in line with your shoulders on either side of your head. Straighten your elbows to press the weights above your head until your arms are straight but not locked. Slowly lower the weight back to your shoulders along the same path. Wink at yourself in the gym mirror.  
**What does it do?** It means you can shove those cumbersome suitcases in the loft with nae bother, you big man you.



# Chest

And so to Mr Christian Finn, creator of [www.thefactsaboutfitness.com](http://www.thefactsaboutfitness.com), for the best chest exercises. Perform two sets of 10 of these, increasing the weight each week

**1 The move** Bar-bell bench press  
**Muscles worked** Pecs, triceps

**How to do it** You know this one, right? Lie on a bench with your feet flat on the floor. Grab the bar-bell with an overhand grip, slightly wider than shoulder-width. Position the bar above your chest with your arms straight. Slowly lower the bar to your chest. Straighten (but don't lock) your elbows to press the weight back.

**What does it do?** Gives you the opportunity to contribute to that engaging line of banter in the gym which always starts with, "So how much can you bench?" And it gives you immense hand-off power on the pitch.

**2 The move** Incline dumb-bell press  
**Muscles worked** Front deltoids, triceps, upper pecs

**How to do it** Lie on an incline bench set to

between 30 and 45 degrees. Hold a dumb-bell in each hand above you at arm's length with hands shoulder-width apart. Keeping your head, torso and hips pressed onto the bench, slowly lower the dumb-bells to either side of your chest. Pause, then straighten your arms to press the weights up so they finish above your chin.

**What does it do?** It gives you a bit of cleavage on the upper part of the chest – the bit girls see when you wear an open-neck shirt, you Lothario.

**3 The move** Press-up  
**Muscles worked** Pecs, triceps, front deltoids, abs

**How to do it** You already know, and space on this page is tight...

**What does it do?** Strengthening all those muscles makes the missionary position

less painful all round – especially if you can take some of the strain out of your sex face.

**4 The move** Dips  
**Muscles worked** Pecs, triceps

**How to do it** Rest your body weight on the parallel bars of a dip station. Keep arms straight but not locked. Bend your knees and cross your ankles. Keeping your elbows close to your sides, lower yourself for a count of four seconds until your upper arms are parallel to the floor. The more you lean forward the more you target your chest. Press yourself back up, keeping elbows unlocked at the top of the move. Don't stop, man: you've nine more to do.

**What does it do?** Completely knackers you out. Aside from that, well, it works your pecs (major) and your triceps. Oh, did we mention that? ►

# Legs

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Lose the Jonny Bravo look with Matt Brown, lecturer at Premier International personal training. Four moves, do two sets of 10

**1 The move** Deep squat  
**Muscles worked** Quads, hamstrings, glutes, abs  
**How to do it** Pretend you've got the squits in Thailand and are aiming over a faeces-stained hole in the floor. With a bar-bell on your back. Feet shoulder-width apart, back straight, knees slightly bent and in line with feet. Damn, no loo roll. Slowly rise up again.  
**What does it do?** Prepares you for travelling issues. Squats also develop more size, power and strength than any other exercise.

**2 The move** Multi-directional lunge  
**Muscles worked** Quads, glutes  
**How to do it** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, holding big dumb-bells. Take a giant step forward with your left foot, bending the left knee until the thigh is parallel to the floor. Spring back into the start position and immediately take a leftward step to 3 o'clock landing on your left leg. Bend that left knee and keep your right leg straight then push back to the start position. Repeat with your right leg.  
**What does it do?** Improves your co-ordination and balance, strengthening your muscles through all the planes of motion your body naturally moves in.

**3 The move** Step up  
**Muscles worked** Your eyelids. Okay, it's your quads and glutes again  
**How to do it** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart facing something about three feet high. Lionel Messi, perhaps. Lift your right knee to step-up and place your foot on him. Push down with your right leg to straighten it and raise your entire body. Let your left leg hang in the air. Return to the start position and repeat with your left leg.  
**What does it do?** This underrated exercise forces you to be on one leg which needs good core control and balance, meaning you're less likely to be swept off your feet.

**4 The move** Walking lunge  
**Muscles worked** Quads, hamstrings, glutes  
**How to do it** It's the Ministry of Silly Walks with dumb-bells. Perform a squat then pick a spot in the gym and lunge there with exaggerated steps, lowering your back knee to the floor. When you reach the spot, turn and walk back to the start position, perform another squat, then place the weights down.  
**What does it do?** Develops the power to throw your body forward faster – useful for all sports and a great muscle-builder.





# Arms

Hello again, Jonny Bravo. Nice day off yesterday? Over to Jamie Sawyer, the specialist arms dealer at The Third Space gym in London. Welcome to the gun club

**1 The move** A perfect bar-bell curl  
**Muscles worked** Biceps, forearms  
**How to do it** Like the on-flight safety demonstration, you think you know it, but here's the textbook version: stand with your feet shoulder-width apart holding a bar-bell with an underhand grip. Keeping your upper arms tucked against your sides, curl the weight up until it reaches your shoulders. Contract your biceps, then reverse the motion. The exits are here, here and here.  
**What does it do?** It keeps your biceps under constant tension, both when you raise the weight and when you lower it. This means extreme gun sculpting.

**2 The move** Incline dumb-bell curl  
**Muscles worked** Biceps, forearms  
**How to do it** Lie back on an incline bench set to about 45 degrees, holding

a dumb-bell in each hand. Palms facing your body and arms straight. Curl the dumb-bell towards shoulders and rotate your forearm until the weights are vertical with your palms facing each other. Lower to original position and repeat to fade.

**What does it do?** On an incline bench the arm is naturally extended, giving you a greater range of motion.

**3 The move** Low pulley lying cable curl  
**Muscles worked** Still the biceps and forearms. Starting to hurt now, right?  
**How to do it** Attach a straight bar to a low setting on the cable cross-over machine, and hold it with both hands. Lie on your back with your feet resting against the cross-over machine's weight stack. Keep your elbows tucked to your sides and curl them towards your shoulders. Pause, then

lower the bar to the start position.

**What does it do?** This move changes the position of your shoulder, making the bicep work harder.

**4 The move** Skull crusher  
**Muscles worked** Triceps  
**How to do it** Lie face-up on a flat bench. Hold an EZ bar above your chest, elbows locked. Keeping your upper arms perpendicular to the floor, slowly lower the weight by bending your elbows. Once the bar is behind your head, straighten arms to return to the start position. Squeeze your triceps at the top of the movement.  
**What does it do?** It hurts. It forces you to isolate your triceps, making it a great muscle-builder. Don't drop the weight and stove in your own cranium – that would be an sad end to your work-out week. ►



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# Back

The last thing you want is the ladies laughing behind your back. Enter Premier Global Personal Trainer, Megan Flower

**1** **The move** Dumb-bell bent-over row  
**Muscles worked** Lats, traps, biceps  
**How to do it** Stand holding a pair of dumb-bells. Bend forward at the hips until your back is almost parallel to the floor. Legs should be straight but unlocked, arms straight under your shoulders, palms facing in. Draw the weights up to the sides of your chest. Slowly lower the weights and repeat.  
**What does it do?** It'll widen your back while the total body strength it develops will raise your game in every other exercise.

**2** **The move** One-arm dumb-bell rows  
**Muscles worked** Traps, lats, biceps  
**How to do it** Kneel on a bench with your right knee, put your right arm in front of you. Your other leg should be on the floor behind you. Keep your back straight and pull a single dumb-bell up with your left arm to your chest while keeping your elbow tucked in. Slowly lower it to the start position.  
**What does it do?** This strength and size artisan builds the muscles on each side of your back in balanced proportions and thickens your side profile.

**3** **The move** Dumb-bell deadlift  
**Muscles worked** Lower back, hamstrings, abs, traps, quads... etc  
**How to do it** Stand with feet hip-width apart toes tucked under dumb-bells. Bend at your waist to reach down and grab the dumb-bells. Raise back to a standing position, keeping arms straight throughout. Pause, then lower the weights back to the floor.  
**What does it do?** Gives a buffer against that sharp pinch in your lower back when trying to pick up your girlfriend's overfilled suitcase.

**4** **The move** Pull-up  
**Muscles worked** Lats, traps, biceps  
**How to do it** Grab the bar with an overhand shoulder-width grip. Hang so elbows are completely extended. Pull yourself up until your chin crosses the bar. Pause then slowly lower to the starting position without allowing your body to sway.  
**What does it do?** It stops you from stuffing yourself with pies, that's what. The fatter you get the harder every muscle in your back has to work for your chin to creep over the bar. **MH**