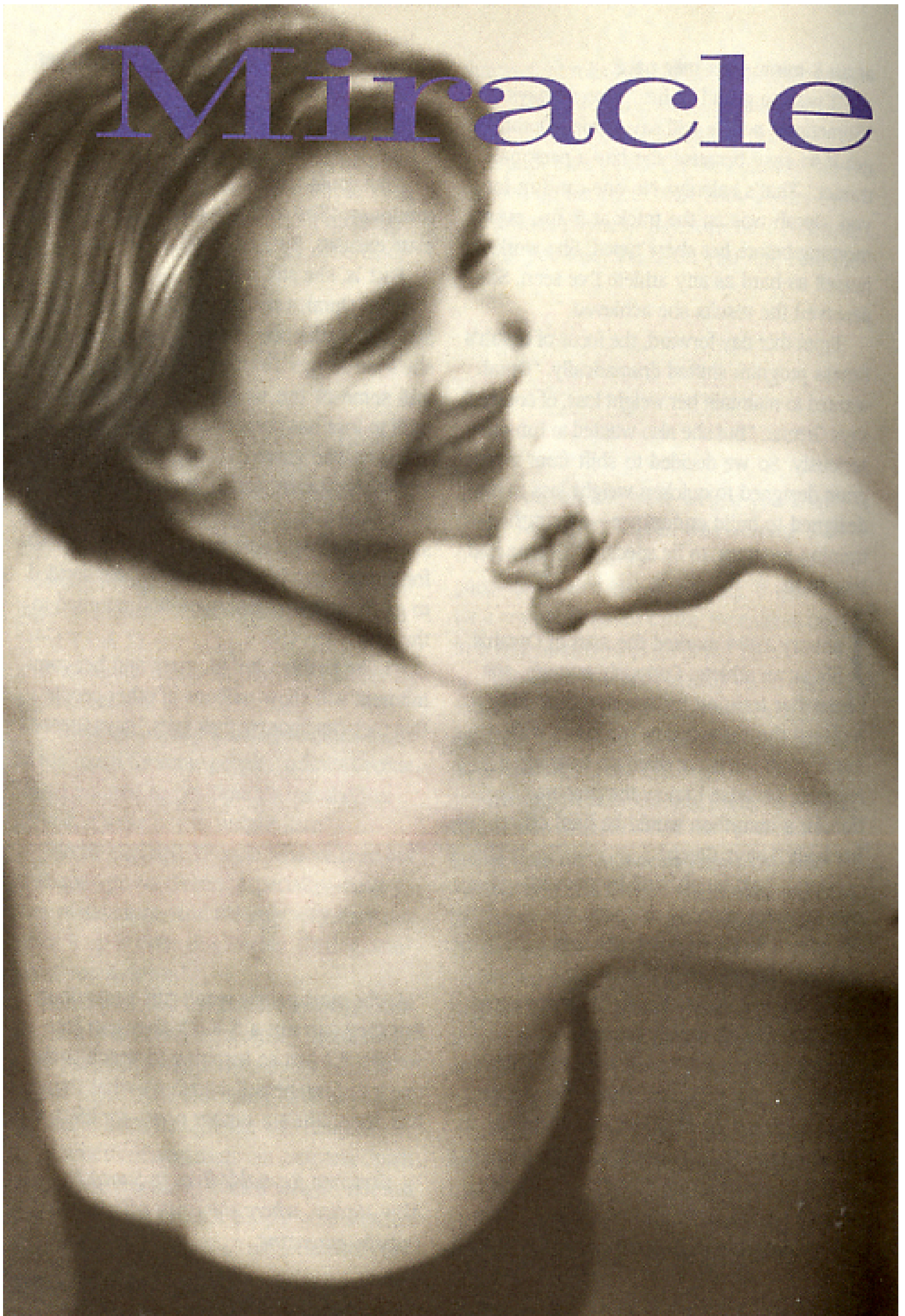


# Miracle



# moves

**Every woman has a problem spot or two she's learned to live with—but doesn't have to. Here, 18 ways to make your body its best.**

By Kimberly Dawn Neumann

**y**ou live a while, you learn a few things. Three of the biggies: 1) Information is power. 2) Time is fleeting. And 3) your body is capable of miracles (birthing babies being just one).

Together, these life lessons add up to a bedrock belief you'll find throughout this magazine. That is, that if you work out wisely—carefully crafting your fitness regimen to suit your needs—and efficiently (time's of the essence, after all), your body will respond by slimming down, building muscle—whatever you want it to. Because it can.

In the pages that follow, we provide all the exercise information you need to target the five most common problem spots of a woman's body (abdominals, arms, thighs, butt and chest) and whip them into shape—fast. Work out as we've described three times a week for at least 30 minutes straight, and your body will make miracles happen. Promise.

## Problem

# A widening waist

**You want a flat belly—the one you had before you had kids. Is that so wrong?**

## Solution

A three-pronged attack:

**1. Resist dieting.** Instead, eat in response to your body's natural hunger signals so your muscles have the fuel they need to burn fat and gain strength. For most women, this means eating 1,400 to 2,000 calories a day—less than 30 percent of them from fat.

**2. Exercise your lungs.** That is, walk, row, run, bike, skate or do aerobics for

30 to 45 minutes or more without stopping at least three times a week. The idea: to get your total body fat percentage low enough (less than 25 percent) so that there's nothing to hide your sculpted abdominals.

**3. Work your abs.** Perform the following exercises to build and tone the muscles in your middle—and perhaps knock your Levis down a size.

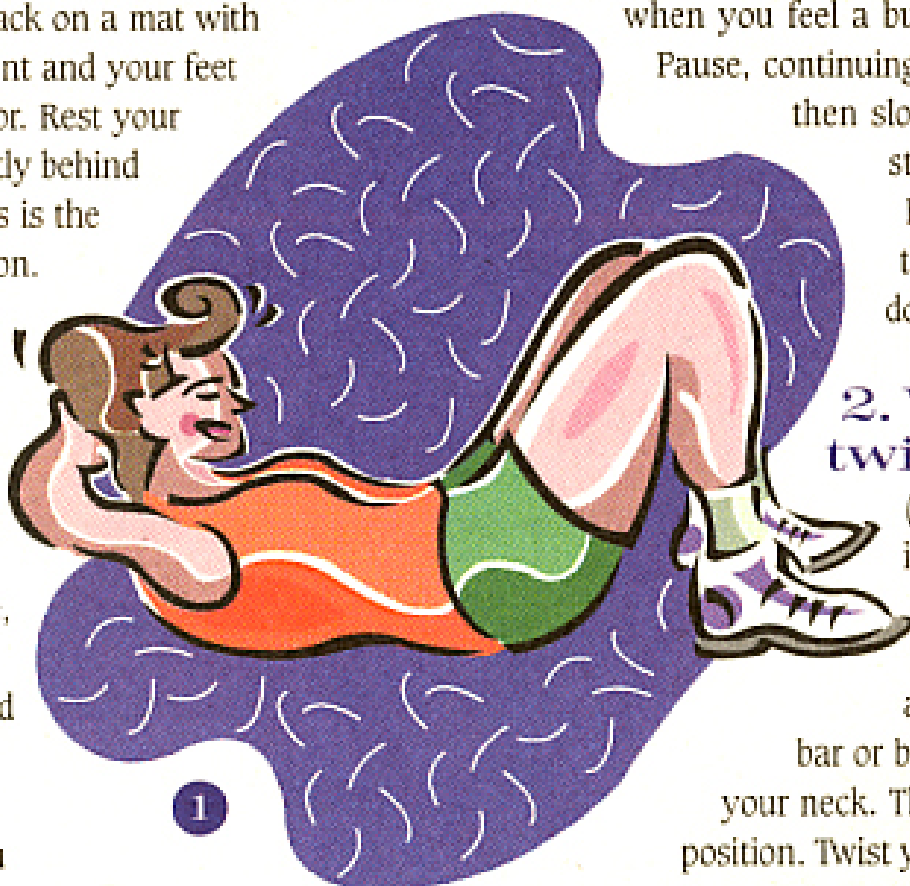
## Homework

### 1. Double crunch

(Works your upper and lower abdominals.)

Lie on your back on a mat with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Rest your fingertips lightly behind your ears. This is the starting position.

Slowly raise your head, shoulders, feet and hips off the mat at the same time, keeping your elbows pointed out and your neck relaxed. Exhale as you



curl up. Concentrate on sucking your navel toward the floor. Stop curling when you feel a burn in your abs.

Pause, continuing to hold abs tight, then slowly return to the starting position.

Repeat 15 times, then rest. Shoot to do at least 3 sets.

### 2. Windmill twist

(Works the muscles in your waist.)

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and hold a bar or broomstick behind your neck. This is the starting position. Twist your torso as far as



you can to the right without moving your head or lower body. Pause for a moment, then slowly return to the starting position. Twist to the left and slowly return to center. That's 1 repetition. Repeat 25 times, then rest. Aim to do at least 3 sets.

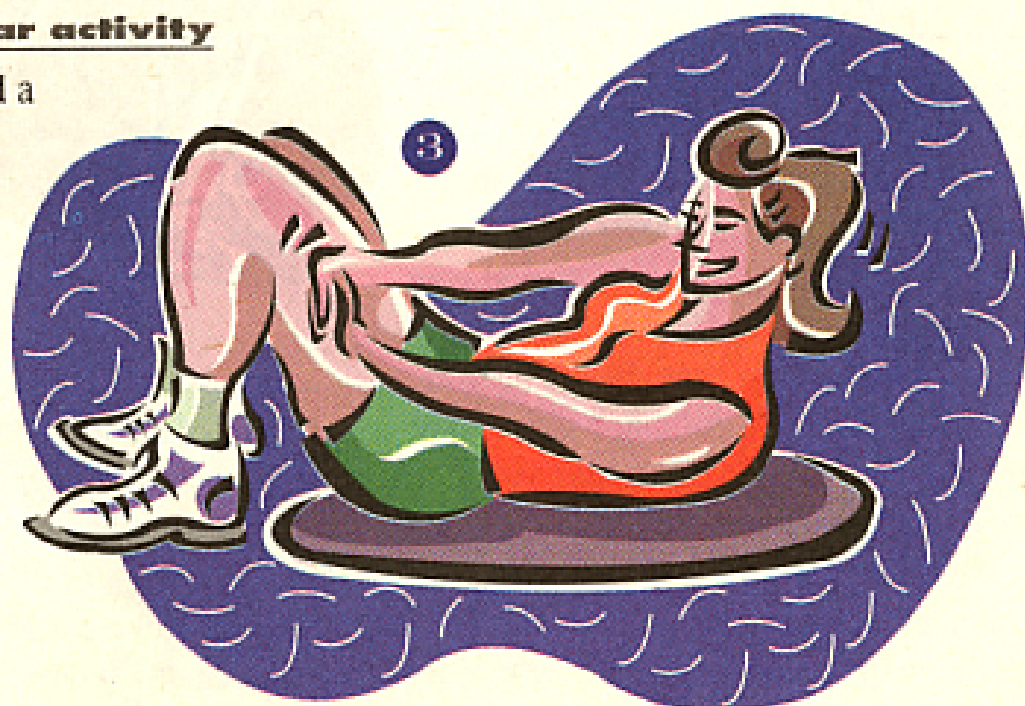
### 3. Oblique pulse

(Works your obliques—the muscles that run along both sides of your abdomen.)

Lie on your back on a mat with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Lift your head and shoulders, and twist your torso to the left, clasping your left hand over your right and extending both arms out to the left side of your body. Gently pulse 20 times in this position, exhaling with each pulse. Next, curl your left shoulder toward your right thigh. Then pulse 20 times to the right. Don't come down between sides. That's 1 set. Try to do 3 sets.

#### **Extracurricular activity**

Got time for more? Add a Pilates session to your regimen. Popular with dancers, this workout (which incorporates yoga-like movements and machine work) builds a strong middle. Call (800) 474-5283 for the location of the Pilates studio nearest you.



## **Problem**

# Troublesome Triceps

**Real-life epiphany #1: You raise your arm to wave to a friend and your triceps beat you to the punch.**

## **Solution**

Isolate your triceps—three separate muscles at the backs of your upper arms—and work them until they're toned. (Quick primer: Triceps means "three heads" because the muscles attach to the bone in three places.)

## **Homework**

### **1. Banded kick-back**

Stand upright with your shoulders squarely over your hips and hold an exercise band or a piece of rubber tubing in your right hand (wrap it around your hand to shorten it and increase the resistance if you like). Next, cross your right arm in front of you and grab the left side of your waist with your right hand. The band should now hang between your hand and your left side.

Grasp the loose part of the band in your left hand and bend your elbow so that it points straight behind you and your left hand rests alongside your right. This is the starting position. Straighten your arm from your elbow by pushing back steadily, keeping your palm facing behind you. Don't move your upper arm. Return to the starting position. Repeat 15 to 20 times, then rest. Shoot to do 3 sets with your left arm before repeating the routine with your right.



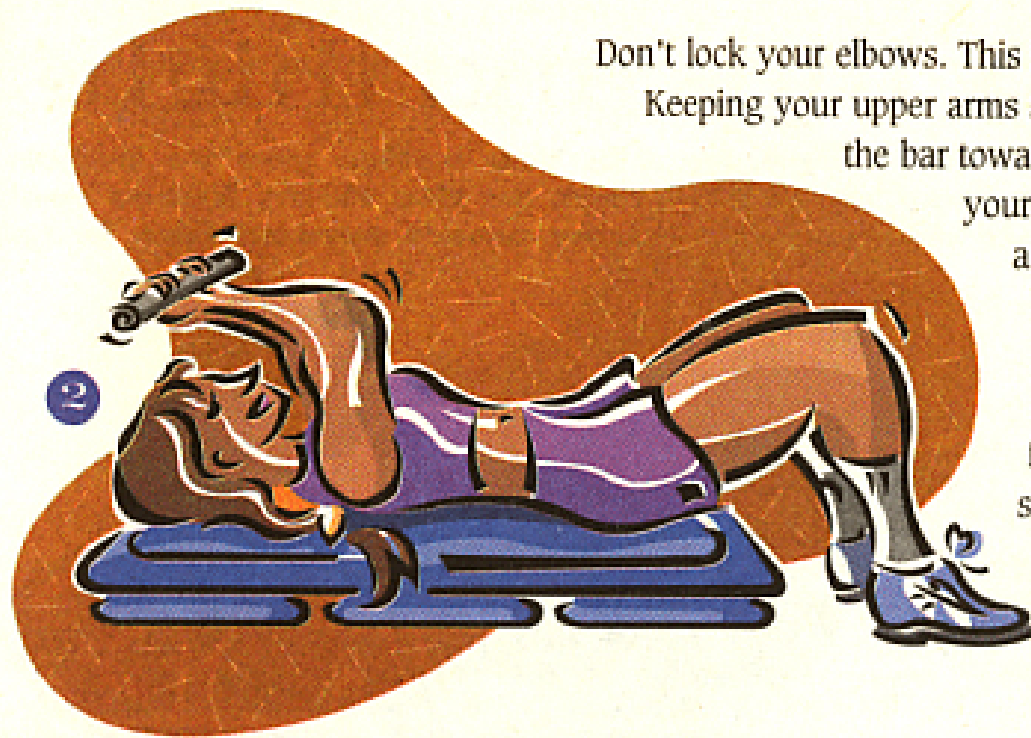
### **2. Lying French press**

Lie on your back on a step or mat with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Rest a bar or barbell across your hips. Grab the bar with your palms facing the floor, and extend your arms all the way up until your hands are directly over your shoulders.

Don't lock your elbows. This is the starting position. Keeping your upper arms stationary, slowly lower the bar toward your head by bending your elbows. Stop when your

arms make a 90-degree angle, your palms face the ceiling and the bar almost touches your forehead. Return to the starting position. Repeat 15 times, then rest.

Try to do 3 sets.



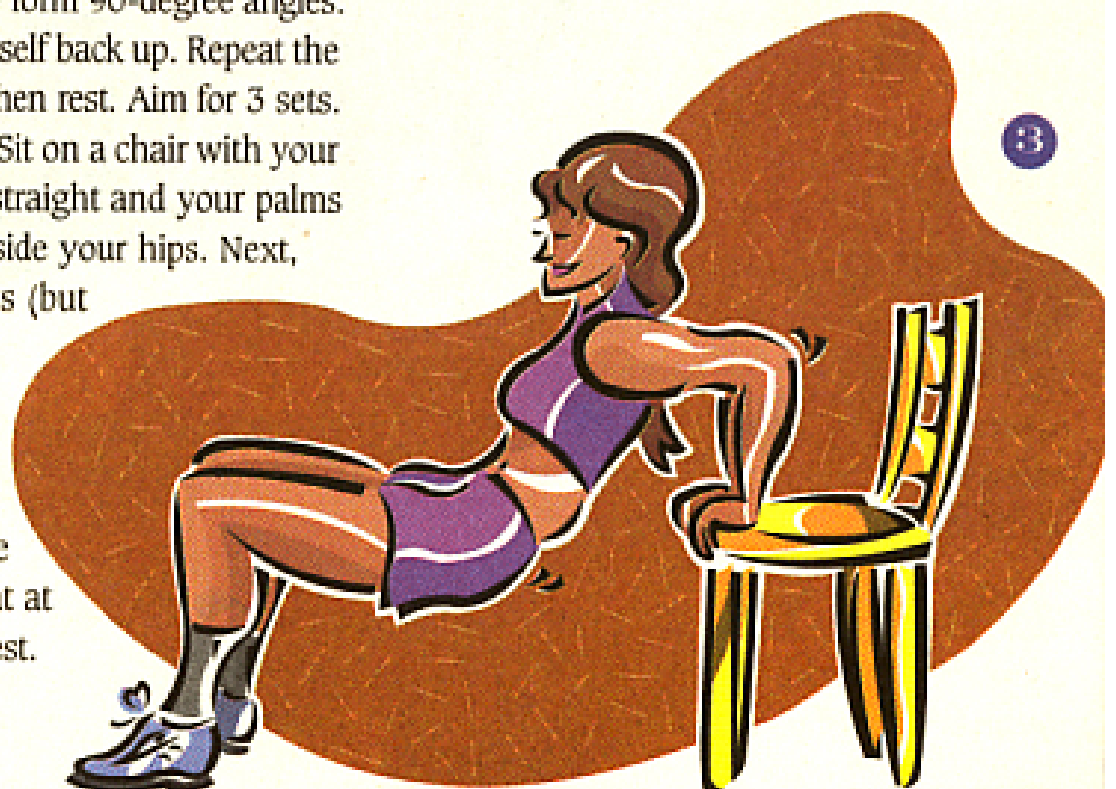
### 3. Reverse dip pushup

Sit on the edge of a chair with your legs extended in front of you and your hands gripping the seat alongside your hips. Keeping your arms straight, slide your butt off the chair and bend your knees slightly so that your feet are flat on the floor and can support some of your weight. Next, lower your body by bending your elbows until they form 90-degree angles. Pause, then push yourself back up. Repeat the movement 10 times, then rest. Aim for 3 sets.

An easier option: Sit on a chair with your legs bent, your back straight and your palms flat on the seat alongside your hips. Next, straighten your elbows (but don't lock them) and use your arms to lift your butt slightly off the chair. Pause, then gradually return to the sitting position. Repeat at least 15 times, then rest. Shoot to do 3 sets.

#### **Extracurricular activity**

Early for aerobics class? Legs too tuckered to run on the treadmill? Hop on a rowing machine. Stroke for just 15 minutes and you'll feel it for a week—but you'll soon have the triceps to show for it.



## **Problem**

# Chunky hips and thighs

**Real-life epiphany #2: You notice you've begun to sit very carefully—toes on the floor, knees and heels up—so your thighs won't spread like jelly.**

## **Solution**

Get moving. Perform the following exercises, which target your inner and outer thighs, three times a week, and you'll tone where you need it most. Plus, add 30- to 45-minute bouts of walking, cycling, stair climbing or aerobics on the days in between, and you'll enhance your body's ability to burn fat (muscle burns more calories at rest than fat).

## **Homework**

### **1. Dancer's plié**

(Works your inner thighs.)

Stand behind a chair with your feet placed flat on the floor just slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, your fingertips lightly resting on the top of the chair for balance. This is the starting position. Turn your toes outward at about a 45-degree angle, and bend your knees, keeping them directly over your toes. Be sure to tuck in your buttocks as you descend. Then, while squeezing your inner thigh muscles, slowly return to the starting position. Repeat at least 15 times, then rest. Try to do 3 sets.

### **2. Band knee press**

(Works the muscles in your outer thighs.)

Lie on your back on a mat and slip your feet

through an exercise band (or a piece of rubber tubing you've tied to form a circle) and pull the band up until it's across your knees. Next, bend your knees so that your feet are together and flat on the mat, and place your hands on the floor beside your hips. Open your knees, pulling against the band until you feel



tension. Pause, continuing to press against the band, then bring your knees back together. Repeat 15 to 25 times, then rest. Aim to do 3 sets.

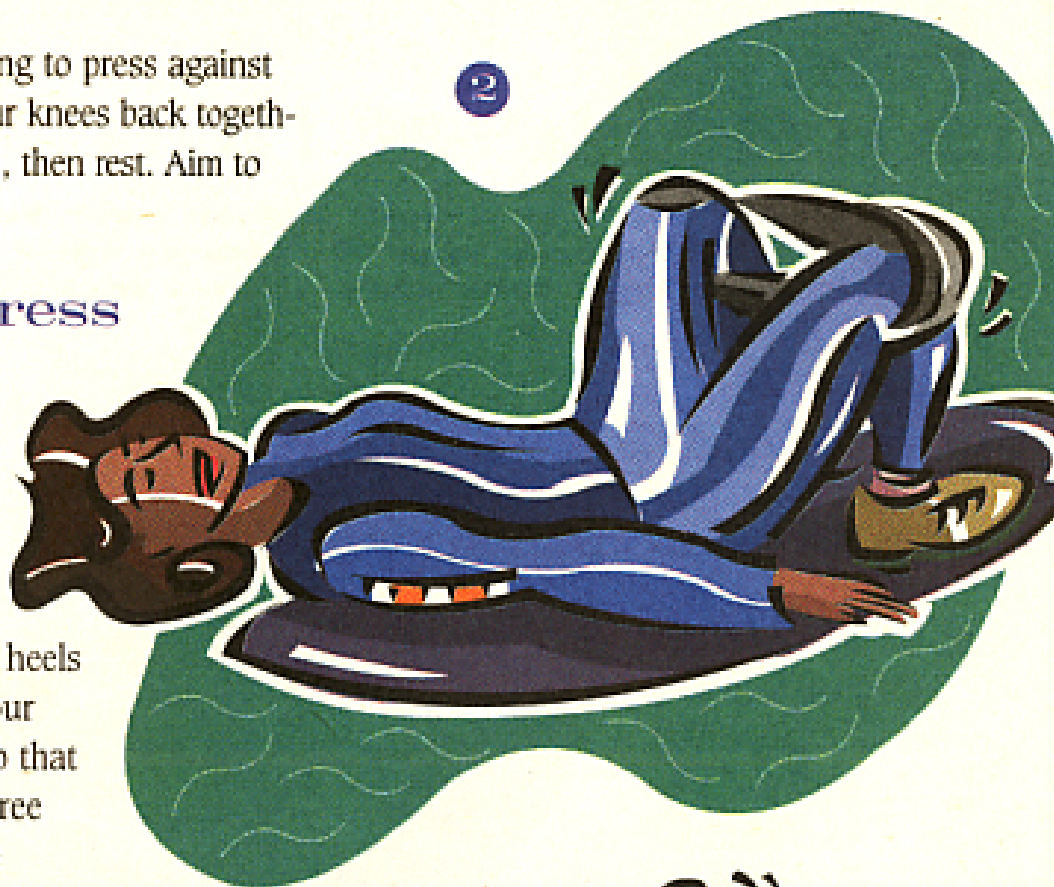
### 3. Ceiling press

(Works your inner thighs.)

Lie on your back on a mat with your arms at your sides and your legs straight up in the air. Press your heels together and turn out your toes. Bend your knees so that your legs form a 45-degree angle, then return to the starting position by pressing up through your heels (as though you're pushing against the ceiling) and squeezing your inner thighs. Repeat 25 times, then rest. Shoot to do at least 3 sets.

#### **Extracurricular activity**

Ballet. Any movement a dancer makes in the first position (that is, standing with your hips aligned with your shoulders, your heels together and your toes turned out slightly) works those hard-to-reach muscles in the hips and thighs. Call your local Y for more information about beginner ballet classes near you.





## **Problem**

# Borderless butt

**Twenty years at a desk kicked your butt and left it for dead—right where your firm fanny used to be. You want your tight tush back. Is that really so much to ask?**

## **Solution**

Target two groups of muscles:

1) the hamstrings—the muscles at the backs of your thighs that, when toned, provide that desirable delineation between your tush and thigh. And 2) the gluteals—the large muscles in your buttocks that help you climb stairs and give your buttocks their rounded shape.

## **Homework**

### **1. The good morning**

Stand with your back straight and your feet about shoulder-width apart, holding a bar (you can even use a broomstick if you like). Bend forward from the waist until your torso is almost perpendicular to your legs, keeping your back absolutely flat and parallel to the floor throughout. Pause, then straighten up. Repeat at least 15 times, then rest. Shoot to do 3 sets.

### **2. Rear leg squeeze**

Kneel on a mat with your hands flat on the mat, about shoulder-width apart, and your elbows slightly bent (not locked). Without



arching your back, lift your left leg back and up, keeping it bent and your foot flexed throughout the movement. At the top of the lift (when your thigh is just about parallel to the floor), squeeze your buttocks as hard as you can, then slowly return to the starting position. Repeat the movement at least

15 times, then rest. Switch legs and repeat. That's 1 set. Aim to do 3 sets.

### 3. Prone leg lift

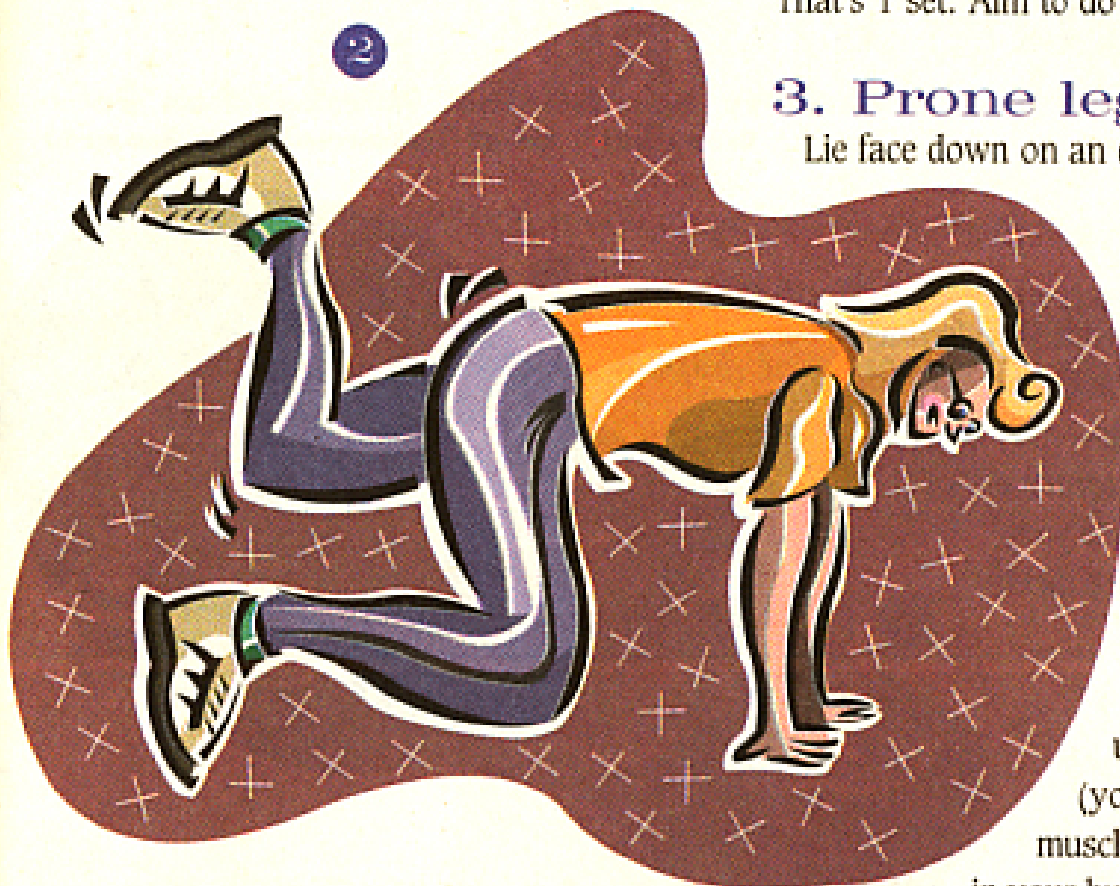
Lie face down on an exercise mat with your arms crossed underneath you and your forehead resting on your hands. Keep your feet about a foot apart and point your toes. Lift your left leg slightly (keeping your leg extended), using your glutes (your *gluteus maximus* muscles, the large muscles in your buttocks) to initiate the

movement. Make sure your hips stay on the mat throughout the exercise. Pause, then slowly lower your leg. Repeat at least 25 times, then switch legs. That's 1 set. Try to do 3 sets.

#### **Extracurricular activity**

Work your butt off (literally) with this aerobic option: Hop on a treadmill with an incline feature, crank it up and walk nonstop for 20 minutes.

Hint: The higher the angle of incline, the more directly you'll work your glutes.



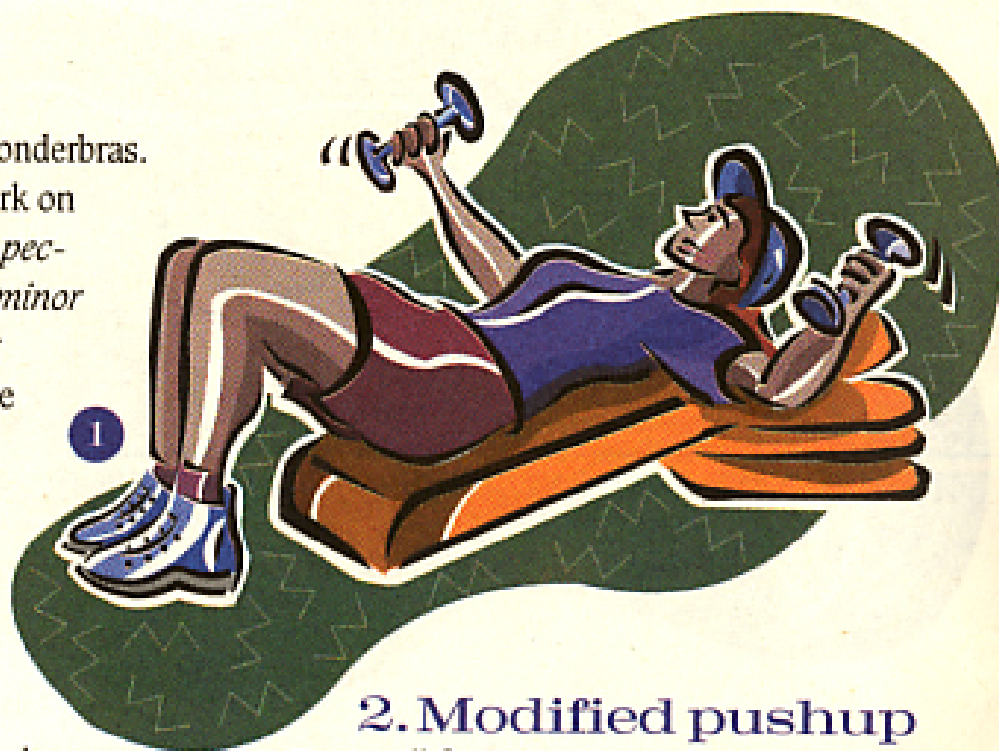
## Problem

# Sagging chest

**Gravity and babies. Neither has your breasts' best interests at heart.**

## Solution

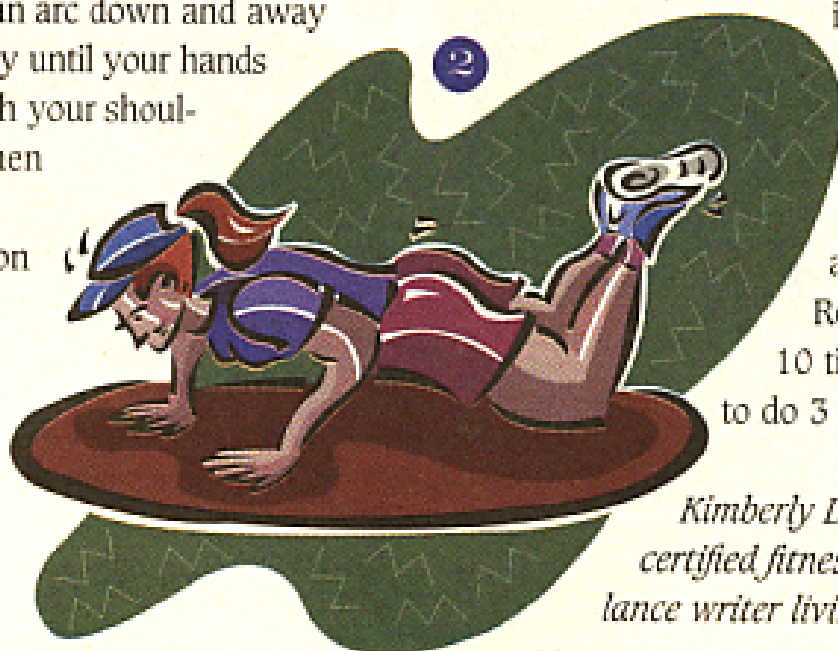
Stock your wardrobe with Wonderbras. Or save your pennies and work on building your pectorals—the *pectoralis major* and *pectoralis minor* muscles that lie beneath your breasts. To do the latter, tackle the exercises below.



## Homework

### 1. Incline fly

Grasp a dumbbell in each hand, lie on your back on an incline bench (or a step adjusted so that one side is higher than the other) and raise your arms directly over your chest. Your palms should be facing each other, your elbows slightly bent. This is the starting position. Slowly lower the dumbbells in an arc down and away from your body until your hands are in line with your shoulders. Pause, then return to the starting position following the same path. Repeat 15 times, then rest. Shoot to do at least 3 sets.



### 2. Modified pushup

Get on all fours on a mat, placing your hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Walk your hands forward until your body is sloping upward from your butt. Next, cross your ankles. This is the starting position. Bending your elbows, lower your chest far as you comfortably can (within 2 inches of the mat is excellent). Then press yourself back to the starting position. Be sure to maintain a flat back and tight abdominals throughout. Repeat the movement 10 times, then rest. Shoot to do 3 sets.

*Kimberly Dawn Neumann is a certified fitness instructor and freelance writer living in New York City.*