



get it now:

look **5**
pounds
thinner

6 moves
that make
you look
taller and
slimmer—
instantly

“Have you lost weight?”

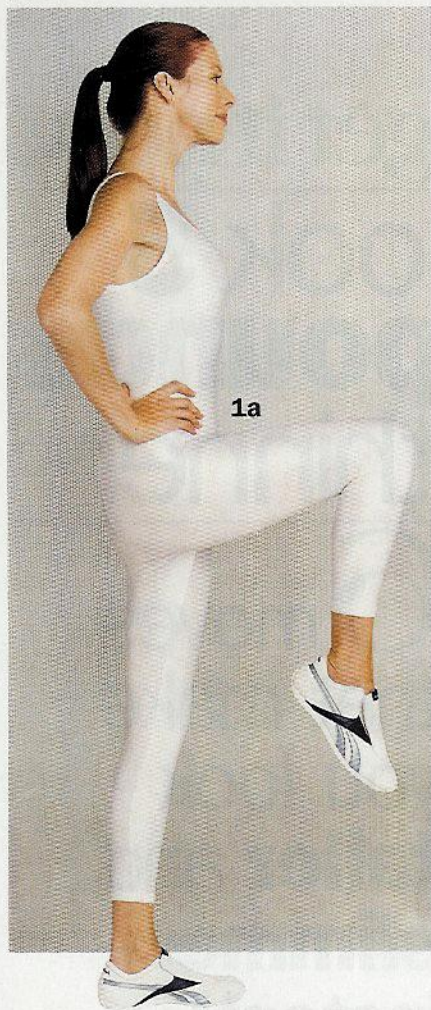
Get used to hearing that question if you follow our four-minute posture-enhancing routine. The bonus: It'll take inches off your butt and abs while giving you a graceful, more confident look. ➡

by Margit Feury * photographs by Monica Botkier

get it now: look **5 pounds** thinner

the workout

Need to drop five pounds by tonight? Try this quick trick: Pull your shoulders back and stand up tall. Yeah, we know it's cheating, but improving your posture flattens your abs and butt and makes you look slimmer, says yoga instructor Baron Baptiste, author of the new book *Journey Into Power* (Simon & Schuster, 2002). He's given us six simple moves that strengthen the abs, back and shoulders and create a leaner, more confident appearance. Do this four-minute posture primer at least three times a week. Soon, you'll look like you've dropped five pounds—without giving up a single treat.



1. balancing back stretch

[Elongates the spine and stretches the chest; strengthens the shoulders, back, legs, abs and arms.]

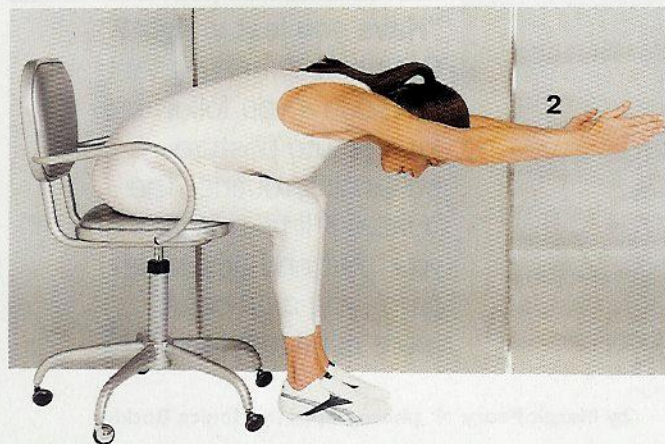
a. Standing tall, shift your weight to your left leg and bring your right knee up toward your chest. Place your hands on your hips or hold on to a chair for balance.
b. In one motion, bend forward, extend your right leg behind you, and lean over until your torso and right leg are parallel to the floor. Open your arms out behind you like wings with your palms facing down. Draw your shoulder blades together, and focus on pulling them down your back. Arch your back slightly. Lower your chin so your neck is in a neutral position, and focus on a spot on the floor about two feet in front of your standing foot. Hold for 30 seconds, then switch legs. (If you're using a chair for balance, stretch your opposite arm out in front of you or to the side.)



2. superman arm raise

[Elongates the spine; strengthens the shoulders and back.]

Sit on a firm chair or bench with your chest on your thighs and your hands by your feet (not shown). Look down at the floor so your neck stays in line with your spine. Extend your arms in front of you, reaching out as far and as high as you can, palms facing in. Try to form a straight line from your hips out to your fingertips. Feel your spine getting longer with each deep breath you take. Contract your back and abs as you hold for 30 seconds.



3. standing elbow squeeze

[Stretches the chest; strengthens the upper arms and shoulders.]

Stand with feet together, shoulders slightly back, elbows bent and hands on your lower back, fingers pointing down to the floor. Slowly pull your elbows back as if they might touch behind you, and hold for 30 seconds.

HAIR: STACY BENEKE FOR R.J. BENNETT REPRESENTS. MAKEUP: BATA FOR 3 C'S AT UTOPIA. PAGE 173: CYN & LUCA HALTER. LETARTE BY LISA CABRINHA BOY SHORTS. PAGES 174-175: BODYWRAPPER BODYSUIT. REEBOK SNEAKERS. SET DESIGN: JESUS WILLIAMS.



4. tree pose

[Stretches the body from head to toe.]

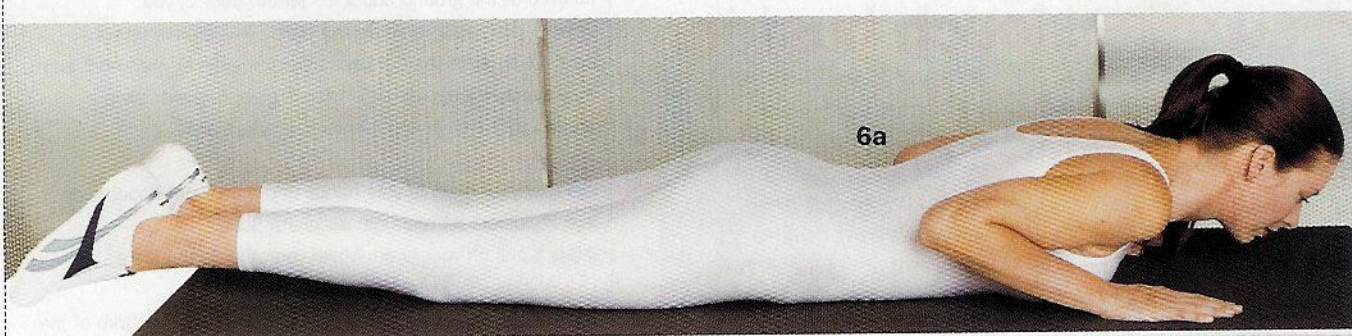
Standing tall, shift your weight to your right leg and place the bottom of your left foot against your right inner thigh (or as high up on your leg as you can). Press down through the sole of your right foot, taking the time to establish your balance. Keep your hip bones level; don't sink into your right leg. Bring your hands together in front of your rib cage, or hold on to a chair for stability. If you can, raise your arms overhead (not shown), but keep your shoulders down—don't let them hunch up to your ears. Interlace your fingers and roll your wrists back so your palms face up. Reach as high as you can while trying to stay relaxed. Hold for 30 seconds, then lower your arms and switch legs.



5. mountain pose

[Pulls the torso up toward the sky rather than giving in to gravity; prevents slouching.]

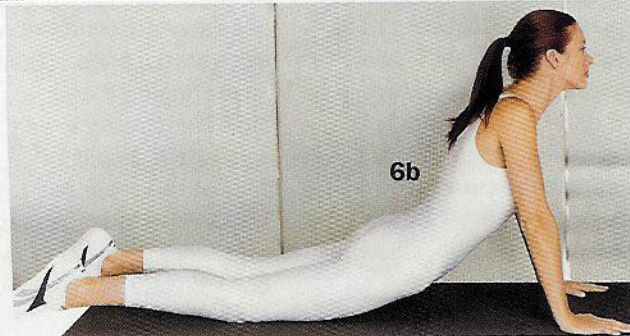
Stand with feet together, arms at sides, palms facing forward (not shown). Inhale and sweep your arms overhead, turning palms in. Look up at the ceiling or, if that hurts your neck, focus on a spot above eye level. Tuck your tailbone under slightly (so your back doesn't overarch), and stretch from head to toe. Hold for 30 seconds.



6. heart opener

[Pulls the shoulders back; strengthens the arms, shoulders and back.]

- a. Lie facedown on the floor with your legs extended behind you and your hands underneath your shoulders, palms on the floor.
- b. Press up, lifting your chest and belly off the floor. Pull your shoulders back, and press down through the tops of your feet. Your head, shoulders and chest should be in a neutral position, as if you were standing upright (this will become easier once your back gets stronger). If you can, squeeze your abs, butt and legs and lift your upper thighs off the floor. Hold for 30 seconds.



instant **look-lean** tips

so how's *your* posture?

STILL NOT SURE WHERE YOU STAND WHEN IT COMES TO PROPER ALIGNMENT? To maximize your appearance—and minimize aches and pains—take this mini posture assessment, which was designed by John Christman, Ph.D., a biophysicist with a specialty in exercise physiology and creator of the stretching and strengthening video *Power Posture*.

- 1. Hold an 18-inch ruler against your chest at mid-shoulder level.** If your shoulders touch the ends, you're hunching forward. Pull your shoulders back so they're in line with your ears; try to maintain that alignment when sitting or standing.
- 2. Stand against the edge of a door so it runs along your spine.** Have a friend measure the gap between the door and the curve of your neck (this is the cervical curve of your spine). It should be no more than about one and a half inches. If it's more than that, your head is jutting too far forward. Lift your chin up so it's parallel to the floor, and pull your head back until your ears line up over your shoulders.
- 3. Check yourself in the mirror.** If it looks like your shoulders come straight out from your neck, you're holding them too high. Relax and let them drop down. Squeeze your shoulder blades together softly to open up your chest. Now turn to the side. If your butt is sticking out and your low back is curving in, your lower body is likely out of alignment. Tuck your hips forward and contract your abs.
- 4. Align your knees and feet.** Make sure both face forward. Feet that turn in or out too much can increase wear and tear on the knees and affect hip alignment, throwing off your overall posture.

4 surefire **slouch busters**

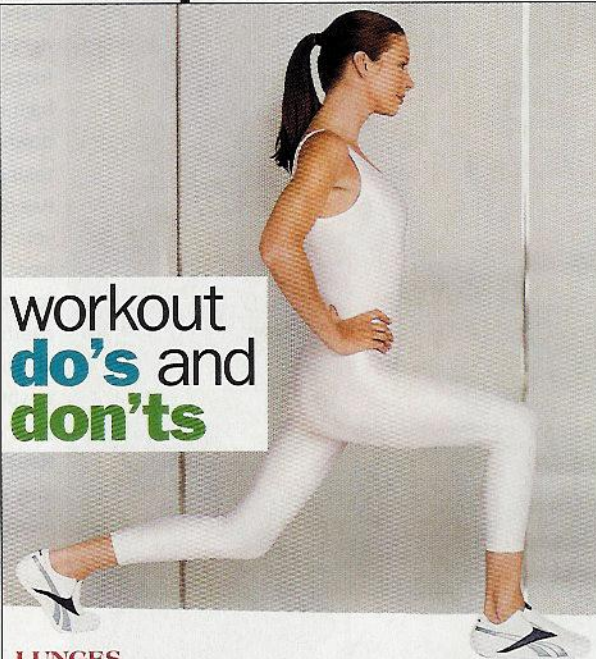
Use this quick cheat sheet from John R. Chait, a chiropractor in Sarasota, Florida, to make good form second nature.

- **STICK A PILLOW BEHIND YOUR LOWER BACK** when sitting for an extended period. It helps maintain the lumbar curve (the last six to 12 inches of your spine above the tailbone), which, when it flattens, causes your shoulders to fall forward.
- **YOUR CHAIR AT WORK SHOULD BE HIGH ENOUGH** so your thighs slope down slightly when your feet are on the floor. This keeps your

hips and lower back from rolling forward. Give back muscles a break by getting up and walking around every 20 minutes or so.

- **KEEP YOUR COMPUTER MONITOR** at eye level. If it's too low, your head will tilt forward, stressing the neck.
- **CARRY A BACKPACK OVER BOTH SHOULDERS** rather than slinging it over just one side. If you're a tote-only person, switch shoulders frequently so you don't constantly stress the same muscles, which can cause one shoulder to rise higher than the other.

workout **do's** and **don'ts**



LUNGES

- do** keep your spine in a natural upright position. Be sure most of your weight is on your leading leg.
- don't** let your knee extend past your toes, warns Adam Scott, a fitness instructor at Equinox gym in New York City. "This puts extra stress on the knee joint and can decrease your stability." Keep it in line over your ankle.

RUNNING

- do** keep your stride on the shorter side. This alleviates stress on the hips, knees and lower back, says Scott. Also, look forward at the ground about 20 feet in front of you.
- don't** carry your radio in your hand. This tenses up your arm, which stresses the back muscles, affects alignment and may eventually cause neck or back pain. Instead, strap it around your arm or clip it onto your waistband.

CRUNCHES

- do** rest your head in your hands and move your head, neck and shoulders as one unit, suggests Scott.
- don't** pull on your head. Make your abs do the lifting.

INDOOR CYCLING

- do** adjust your seat so when the pedal is at the bottom of the circle, your knee is slightly bent. When your front foot is parallel to the floor, your knee should be centered over the pedal.
- don't** slouch forward over the handlebars (your shoulders will likely be up near your ears). Instead, bend forward from the waist. This will help minimize neck and back pain and keep your diaphragm open, enhancing breathing.

PUSH-UPS

- do** keep your hands in line with your chest, says Scott. Placing them in front of your chest strains the shoulders.
- don't** let your fingers angle too far out to the sides. Keep them facing forward, and avoid locking your elbows.