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# 10 ways to change your body without surgery

By Mike Bruno | 1/19/2004



It's no secret that people are willing to go to amazing lengths in the name of looking good. Some folks spend thousands and willingly expose themselves to invasive surgery (liposuction) and botulism (Botox) just so they can be happier with the person they see in the mirror every morning.

Fortunately, you don't have to run to a plastic surgeon waving your credit card just to obtain a flatter tummy, a tighter butt or a brighter smile. Here are 10 simple, inexpensive and relatively painless ways you can improve your body without going under a knife.

- **Start an abdominal routine.** Take five minutes before your morning shower to crank out two or three sets of 15 abdominal crunches (knees bent). If you do them faithfully every other day, you'll noticeably tighten up your midsection and improve your overall mobility.
- **Use the stairs at your home or job (instead of taking the elevator).** "Taking the stairs strengthens all the major muscle groups in your lower extremity. Hamstrings, glutes, quads and calves are all going to reap that benefit," says Cedric Bryant, PhD, chief exercise physiologist for the American Council on Exercise. As a side bonus, you'll also burn a calorie for every 15 steps.
- **Do wall slides and lunges before bed.** Both exercises will help firm your major lower-body muscle groups, such as glutes, quads and hamstrings. Start with wall slides — stand with your back against the wall and your feet 12 to 18 inches in front of you, then slide down the wall until your thighs are parallel to the ground, and come back up. Do two sets of 15. Finish with lunges — start by taking a giant step forward with one leg, then lower into lunge position until the knee on your opposite leg almost touches the ground. Make sure the knee of your standing leg does not go out beyond your toe. Push through the

front heel to raise back up. Do two sets of 15 with one leg, then two sets with the opposite leg.

- **Use body-shaping undergarments.** Only grandmas wear girdles — modern women wear "control-top" panties, nylons or tights. Of course they serve exactly the same purpose, and are a great, inexpensive way to instantly flatten your stomach and to smooth and shape your butt.
- **Try yoga.** The ancient art of yoga burns calories (the Vinyasa styles burn between 300 and 500 in a one-hour session) while improving your overall flexibility and posture. "The benefits of yoga are cumulative," said Tony Sanchez, director of the US Yoga Association. "It's just a matter of time before the participant will improve flexibility, strength, concentration, will power and determination."
- **Take a walking tour.** Most cities conduct interesting weekend walking tours focused on subjects like architecture, urban planning and history. It's a great way to get some exercise, not to mention learn a thing or two about the place you live. Call your local parks department to learn about tours in your area.
- **Drink plenty of water.** At minimum, you should consume six 8-ounce glasses of water or water-based beverages every day. All fluids that are non-alcoholic and caffeine-free count toward water intake, as do foods such as fresh produce, yogurt and soup.

"Dehydration can cause fatigue, headaches, constipation and tooth decay, and it can prevent us from burning as many calories per day as we would with adequate fluids," said Cynthia Sass, RD, spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association. "Being well-hydrated helps our bodies function optimally and improves our looks, including our skin."

- **Only wear flat-front pants.** Pleats are a no-no for so many reasons, so put them in a box for your next Salvation Army drop-off. Besides being a hopelessly unstylish relic of the 1980's, pleats create unnecessary puffiness around your mid-section — not the best area to draw attention to if you have something to hide.
- **Splurge on a new haircut.** What better way to focus attention away from your figure and toward your bright smile than with a hip new hairstyle? Talk to a stylist about cuts that complement your face. There are also online makeover sites that will let you upload your photo and try on new 'dos.

- **Get a spray-on tan.** The days of lying in a box soaking in harmful ultraviolet rays are over. In addition to the 60-second spray tan booths that are all the rage, you can also go to a salon that offers aerosol spray tanning and let a technician airbrush on a harmless tan solution complete with shaded muscle contours. The process takes about a half hour (including drying) and it's costlier than the spray booths, but you'll leave looking bronzed, beautiful *and* buff.

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