



**PART 2**

**THE FIRM UP ACTION PLAN**

## Let's Get Started

I recommend starting the Firm Up Program on a Sunday. For most of us, weekends tend to allow us a little more flexibility in our schedules. So there's a better chance that you'll have time on Saturday to go food shopping and pick up anything else you might need (like a new pair of walking shoes or dumbbells), you'll be less likely to skip your first workout, and you'll feel great on Monday morning for having accomplished the first day of the program. But keep in mind that this program has to fit into your life if it's going to work for you. So get started when it feels right for you.

Read on for the five to-do items that you'll need to take care of before you start.

## TO-DO #1: GET YOUR GROCERIES

Review the first week's meal plans in chapter 3. The meal plans and grocery lists are based on eating 1,700 calories a day—that includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, two healthy snacks, and one indulgent treat each day. If you want to cut more calories (we don't recommend going below 1,500), see page 312 in chapter 6, *The Science behind the Firm Up Eating Plan*, for healthy ways to do that. If you don't like a particular meal, you can make a substitution. (Review chapter 7, *Mix-and-Match Meals*, for lots of healthy low-cal alternatives.) Just remember, if you alter the meal plans, make sure you adjust the grocery list. And then go shopping and stock up on a week's worth of meals.

You'll also notice some vitamins on the first week's grocery list. As added nutritional insurance, we recommend that you take a daily multi-vitamin/mineral supplement that contains 100 percent of the Daily Value (DV) of most nutrients, plus take 100 to 500 milligrams of vitamin C and 500 milligrams of calcium if you're under 50. Take two 500-milligram doses of calcium (for example, morning and evening) if you're 50 or older.

### HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR INGREDIENTS AT THE GROCERY STORE

Your first trip to stock up on ingredients may involve some extra time. You'll be reading labels and comparing brands to find the specific items.

Return grocery trips should be a whiz, however, as you become familiar with the products. Some of your first-week grocery items that are canned or frozen will take you through the second- and third-week menus.

Skim through all the recipes first. Decide what you want to have when given a choice (for example, an apple versus a pear). If you don't like the suggested meal or snack, go ahead and nix it from your list. Be sure to cross off the ingredients from your grocery list, too! Simply substitute another meal or snack from chapter 7, *Mix-and-Match Meals*.

Here are some tips to make your Firm Up food shopping a success. For some specific brand recommendations, see page 321 in chapter 7, *Mix-and-Match Meals*.

- Before your first trip to the grocery store, take a quick inventory of what you already have on hand. You can probably eliminate a few things from your grocery list, such as black pepper and vanilla extract. Don't fret over the exact sizes of the items as specified on the grocery list. For example, if your can of black beans is 16 ounces and the grocery list calls for a 15½-ounce can, you have basically the same amount. Choose the closest possible size to what is specified and move on. If you feel better changing your grocery list to reflect subtle differences in amounts (particularly if you are sending someone else to the store), please do so.
- When choosing dairy products, be sure to note the product expiration date. You'll be shocked at what you may find if you're not careful. I once

## Time-Saving Tips for Healthy Meal Preps

YOU'VE WORKED LATE, you're starving and exhausted, and all you want to do is kick up your heels and have dinner waiting for you. You arrive home and realize that the meat needs to be defrosted before you can even start dinner. Before you eat the leg off the table (and everything in your cupboard), quickly scan the suggested dinners in the three weekly chapters (3, 4, and 5) and chapter 7, Mix-and-Match Meals, and choose something that requires little prep. Or better yet, plan ahead by using some of these easy tips for defrosting your frozen items. You'll soon learn that a little planning goes a long way in simplifying your life.

- Thaw frozen berries in the refrigerator the night before or, to thaw quickly, use the defrost feature on your microwave.
- For the softest, bakery-fresh bread, store it in the freezer in a tightly sealed plastic bag.

Transfer the bread you need to a new sealed plastic bag and thaw on the counter the night before. Or you can defrost each serving in your microwave. You'll be amazed at how long your bread will last, and you'll be able to savor every last soft crumb.

- Always defrost frozen meat or fish in the refrigerator—*never* in the sink or out on the counter. Once your meat has camped out in your refrigerator for 3 days, cook it, or you must throw it out, since significant bacterial growth occurs beyond this time frame. You may defrost your frozen meat in your microwave as well, but watch it carefully because it may start cooking.
- If you use part of a can of soup or vegetable broth for a recipe, pour the remainder immediately into an ice cube tray and freeze for future use.

purchased cottage cheese that was more than 2 months old—yuck! Taking a moment now to check the dates may save you a lot of hassle later.

- Choose canned products—including canned tomatoes, tomato paste, and vegetables—that are labeled “no salt added” or “lower sodium.” For canned soups, choose “low-sodium for sodium-restricted diets” whenever possible. A “light” or “less-sodium” soup is still very high in sodium. The “low-sodium for sodium-restricted diets” soups used in these recipes can usually be found in the “special diet” aisle of your grocery store. Your jar of spaghetti sauce should provide no more than 400 milligrams of sodium per ½-cup serving.
- Look for canned fruit packed in juice or water. “Lite” varieties have some added sugar.
- You'll notice that some recipes call for rinsing your canned products. To do this, you put the food in a colander and rinse with cold water for 2 or 3 minutes to remove some of the excess sodium. Canned beans, vegetables, tuna, and

fruits will taste better when rinsed before adding them to the recipe. Be sure to let all of the water drain off before continuing with the recipe.

- Try farmer's cheese, because it has less saturated fat than 50%-reduced-fat cream cheese.

## TO-DO #2: GEAR UP

Here's what you'll need for the exercise portion of the program. Make sure you have everything before you get started.

- A good pair of walking shoes and socks (for details on what to look for, see page 364)

## Q&A WHEN TO EXERCISE

**Q.** What's the best time of day to exercise?

**A.** It varies from one person to the next. You need to pick a time when you are most willing and able to exercise. You need to fit your workouts into your life when it's most convenient for you—otherwise, other things will always bump exercise off your schedule. I'm not a morning person, so I'll always pick my bed over my sneakers before 9:00 A.M. For me, lunchtime is perfect for getting in my strength-training workout. It's quick and low-sweat, so I don't have to shower. And since I'm a night owl, I hit the pavement or treadmill after I put my son to bed. There's no significant impact on the calories you burn or how quickly you'll see results based on the time of day you exercise. What matters most is that you just do it.

- Dumbbells (see page 22 to determine the appropriate level for you)

- Level 1: 3-, 5-, and 10-pound

- Level 2: 5-, 8-, and 12-pound

- Level 3: 5-, 8-, 10-, and 15-pound

These are general guidelines. You should use an amount of weight that allows you to perform the recommended number of reps while using good form, with the last rep or two being very difficult to complete. If you can crank out the recommended number of reps and still feel as if you could keep going, you need a heavier weight. When you increase to a heavier weight, if you're unable to complete an entire set with the heavier weight, do as many as possible and then finish the set with a lighter weight. Eventually, you'll be able to do the entire set with the heavier weight, and you'll save yourself the clutter and expense of buying sets of dumbbells in 1-pound increments.

## TO-DO #3: SCHEDULE YOUR WORKOUTS

Make your workouts part of your regular daily schedule. Below is an overview of the program; the workouts should take no more than an hour a day. You'll learn how to do each set of exercises in the three weekly chapters that follow.

If a 7-day workout schedule feels daunting, I've included suggestions on page 21 on how you can fit your workouts into 3 or 5 days a week. Pick the one workout schedule that fits your lifestyle best—and get going!

## 7-DAY WORKOUT SCHEDULE

	Aerobic	Strength
<b>Sunday</b>	Easy walk	Basic weights
<b>Monday</b>	Interval walk	Core training
<b>Tuesday</b>	Easy walk	High-rep weights*
<b>Wednesday</b>	Interval walk	Core training
<b>Thursday</b>	Easy walk	Heavy weights*
<b>Friday</b>	Speed walk	Core training
<b>Saturday</b>	Long walk	Rest

\*For week 1, do a basic weight workout instead.

## THE WORKOUT COMPONENTS

What's the difference between an easy walk and an interval walk, you ask? Or basic weights and high-rep weights? Here's what this program's all about.

### The Walks

**Easy walk.** This doesn't mean you're strolling along. It's "easy" because you don't have to think about anything or push yourself to go faster or farther. Just get out there and walk at a moderate pace, as if you had to get somewhere. You should be breathing a little harder but still be able to carry on a conversation.

**Interval walk.** On these days, you'll be picking up the pace for short periods of time,

## How Hard Should You Work?

**MOST EXERCISE SHOULD** feel like you're working between levels 5 and 7 on a scale of 1 to 10. For interval training, you want to pick up the intensity to a level 8 or 9 for short periods of time. Below are descriptions of how each level should feel.

**Level 1:** watching TV

**Level 2:** light housecleaning

**Level 3:** puttering around the yard

**Level 4:** window shopping

**Level 5:** strolling and chatting with a friend

**Level 6:** walking purposefully, but talking is still easy

**Level 7:** rushing to an appointment, conversation limited to short sentences

**Level 8:** speeding because you're about to miss the bus, only yes or no responses are possible

**Level 9:** running to catch the bus as it pulls away; not doable for more than 90 seconds

**Level 10:** sprinting after the bus when you realize you left your purse on it; after 30 seconds forget it