

Simply Toned

There's a reason barre workouts are so popular: The moves are gentle yet effective and can transform your body. This simple at-home routine will get you started.

BY JENNA BERGEN SOUTHERLAND

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLAPHANT IN THE ROOM

MEET YOUR TRAINER

Suzanne Bowen, creator of the BarreAmped fitness program, will show you how to make every toning move work for your body.

MATT RAINEY

“**E**ven women who hate to work out often become addicted to barre—because it’s like nothing they’ve ever experienced,” says Suzanne Bowen, who worked with *Prevention* to create a new series of barre workouts (including the one at right). Bowen, 43 and a mother of two, should know: She discovered barre’s gentle, ballet-inspired movements almost by chance nearly 2 decades ago and has been teaching it to other people ever since.

“I was living in New York City in my mid-20s, and I landed a receptionist position at the first studio in the United States to offer barre workouts,” recalls the Alabama native. “Back then, barre was still under the radar, and I’d never heard of it.” Bowen quickly learned that the method of exercise—developed by Lotte Berk, a German dancer—uses ballet moves that are concentrated on building core stability. “The first time I tried it, I fell in love with the movements because they were so feminine. They were challenging but in a gentle way that was different from anything I had ever tried before,” she says.

Bowen stuck with the routines and noticed her body quickly start to change. “I’d done a lot of weight lifting and intense cardio in the past, and neither shaped my body the way these specific movements did. My butt was more lifted, my legs and arms were more defined, and I was flexible for the first time.”

Over the next 2 years, Bowen became a certified barre instructor and then, wanting to get back to her southern roots, moved to Nashville to open her own studio. As her knowledge deepened, she started adjusting what she had learned in New York to create her own program, BarreAmped, in 2004.

Today, Bowen’s routines—which draw heavily on classic barre techniques but also include low-impact movements that burn fat while protecting joints and increasing core strength—have helped thousands of women and men get in shape without punishing their bodies. “I like to think of it as the ‘non-dread method’ of exercise,” laughs Bowen. “You work hard, but it’s not like you’re going to torture yourself for an hour, and that’s why my clients—especially those in their 50s, 60s, and 70s—stick with it.”

WANT MORE BARRE WORKOUTS? GET THE DVD!
Lose weight, tone up, and love your workout with *Prevention’s* new **Flat Belly Barre DVD** (\$19.95; flatbellybarre.com). You’ll receive three 30-minute routines created by Suzanne Bowen.

CLASSIC BARRE

Tighten, tone, and lengthen your muscles with this ballet-inspired workout.

BARRE BLAST

Feel energized and strong as you pump up your heart rate and burn fat.

TOTAL-BODY BARRE

Slim inches off your waist, butt, and thighs by targeting multiple muscle groups at once.

START NOW!

Try This Flat Belly Barre Routine

Build lean muscle and strengthen your core with these simple moves. No barre is needed—just grab a chair for balance!

HOW TO DO IT: Warm up with a 5-minute walk, or add these moves at the end of your regular walking workout. For the best results, do the routine 3 times a week.

1. PARALLEL THIGH WORK WITH HIP SCOOP

Targets: Thighs, core, obliques

Place one hand on back of chair for balance and stand with feet hip-width apart. Raise heels and bend knees to lower torso a few inches, keeping shoulders over hips and hips over heels. Once you’re at a height where your thighs feel challenged but you can maintain good form, begin scooping your hips from side (A) to side (B). (You’ll feel your abs and obliques working.) Do 15 to 30 pairs of scoops.



Expert Tip
“Remember that form is key,” says Bowen. “Move with precision, watch your body alignment, and be sure to breathe deeply.”

2. STANDING SEAT WORK

Targets: Hips, butt, core

Place one hand on back of chair for balance. Bring heels together and turn legs out so toes are several inches apart, forming a V shape. Keep weight over heels. Reach one leg behind you at a 45-degree angle, placing toes on floor with heel lifted (A). Inhale, expanding belly, then exhale as you squeeze glutes to lift leg a few inches off floor (B), keeping pelvis still. Inhale, bringing toes back to floor, then exhale as you immediately go into next lift. Do 15 to 30 lifts on each side.



Expert Tip
“Exhale and squeeze your glutes as you lift your leg, and inhale and relax your glutes as you lower your leg, allowing your belly to expand,” says Bowen.

3. WIDE SECOND-POSITION THIGH WORK

Targets: Inner thighs, core

Place one hand on back of chair for balance and stand with feet wider than hip-width apart, toes pointing out to sides. Bend knees to lower into plié position and raise one heel. Keeping spine neutral (shoulders over hips) and not allowing hips to tuck under, pulse torso up (A) and down (B) 15 to 30 times. Repeat with opposite heel lifted.



Expert Tip

"If your hamstrings, thighs, or hip flexors are tight, you may need to modify by keeping both heels down and working higher up," Bowen says.

4. SIDE-LYING LEG LIFT

Targets: Butt, outer thighs, obliques, upper back, arms

Lie on right side, right forearm under shoulder, shoulders and hips stacked with right knee bent and left leg extended. Inhale, then exhale as you raise right hip off floor and left leg a few inches off right leg (A). This is starting position. Hold and squeeze through glutes to press left leg behind left hip (B), then inhale as you bring left leg back to starting position. Do this 15 to 30 times. Repeat on opposite side.



Expert Tip

"If you find this move too challenging, keep your bottom hip on the floor," says Bowen.

5. TABLETOP TOE DIP WITH NEUTRAL SPINE

Targets: Core

Lie on back, knees bent at 90 degrees and lifted over hips. On an inhale, lower right leg, tapping right toes to floor. Exhale and bring right leg back to starting position. Repeat on opposite side. Continue alternating toe dips, aiming for 15 to 30 reps on each side.



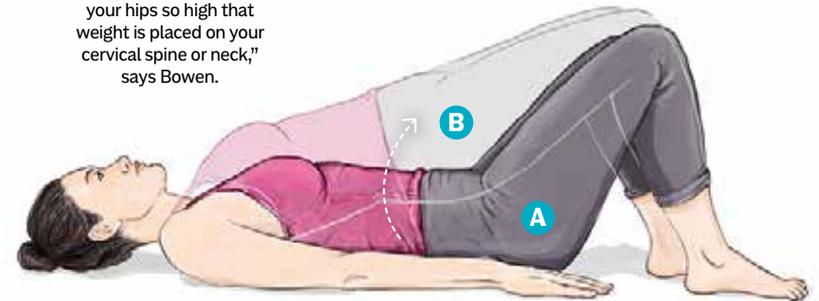
Expert Tip

"The key to this position is the breath," says Bowen. "As you inhale, allow your abs to move out. On the exhale, draw them in closer to your spine."

6. BRIDGE

Targets: Backs of thighs, butt, core

Lie on back, knees bent and feet flat on floor, arms at sides and legs hip-width apart (A). Inhale, then exhale and raise hips a comfortable distance off floor (B) to feel hamstrings, glutes, and lower back engage (do not allow back to arch). Inhale and return hips to floor. Repeat 15 to 30 times.



Expert Tip

"Be careful not to lift your hips so high that weight is placed on your cervical spine or neck," says Bowen.