



The hiker's workout for women

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As winter melts away and mountain trails transform from muddy passages into beautiful hiker-friendly paths, right now is the time to condition your body to scale tall mountains in leaps, bounds and lots of trekking.

GET FIT FOR HIKING

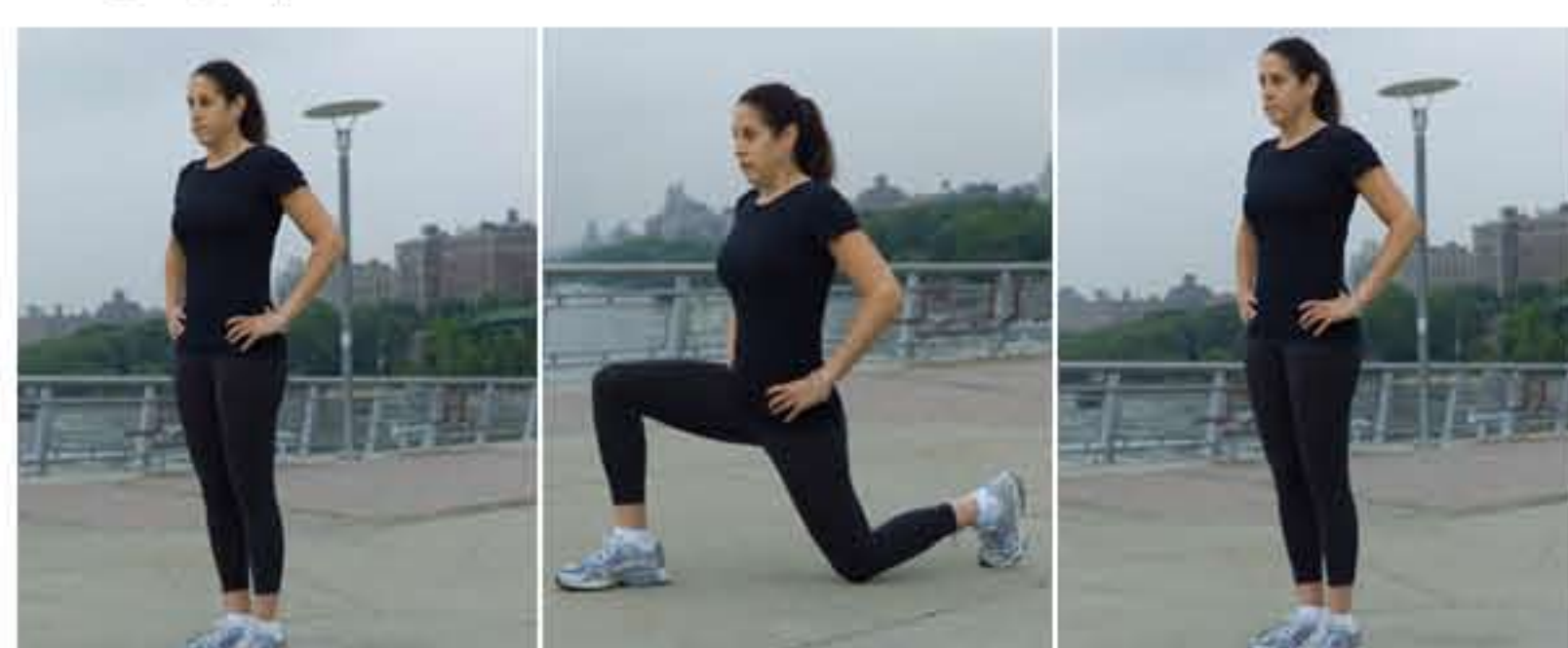
Stacy Berman of *Stacy's Bootcamp* in New York shares her basic four-move workout that every hiker, at any fitness level, can start today to be hiker-ready as the hiking season begins.

Berman knows that when the weather warms up, outdoor activities are in the cards. She encourages hiking for its physical, emotional and social benefits. "Hiking is a great way to get in some exercise, enjoy the great outdoors and spend quality time with loved ones," adds the bootcamp expert.

Though your legs do most of the work on those packed-dirt trails, your whole body is called to action as you use your core muscles to carry packs or balance on and stretch over logs and rocks. Your upper body comes to the rescue if you have to climb rocks or use trekking poles on your wooded workout. Berman says, "Whether you choose to hike around Central Park or climb Kilimanjaro, here are my four basic exercises that will prepare you for the journey."

Walking lunges

"This is a great sport-specific exercise for hiking because it closely mimics some of the big steps you will have to take during the uphill," says Berman. "If you really want to get specific, you can try doing walking lunges up and/or down a hill."



Muscles worked: Quadriceps, gluteals, hamstrings, core muscles

Start position: Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart

Movement: Take a big step forward with your right leg and bend your right knee to a 90-degree angle. Don't let your right knee extend over the right toe. As you push down into your right heel, bring your left foot up to meet your right foot, returning you to start position. Repeat with your left leg. Continue to lunge across a room or open space, then return the other way. Aim for one to three sets of 20 lunges for each leg.

Trainer tip: As you lunge, keep your shoulders above your hips at all times. Do not allow your upper body to lean forward. Be prepared for this exercise to get your heart rate up; be sure you don't hold your breath.

Plank -- elbow and hand variation

Berman recommends plank exercises to train your core muscles to stabilize your spine even during motion. "Your core will be prepared to continue working no matter what the conditions," she explains. "It'll also help if you plan to carry a backpack."



Muscles worked: Abs, lower back, obliques, chest, shoulders, triceps

Start position: Take a basic plank position on the floor, on your toes and with your elbows directly under the shoulders, making sure your body is in a straight line.

Movement: Without dropping to your knees, rise up onto your hands so that you are in a push-up position. Then reverse the motion so you are on your elbows. This is considered one repetition. Aim for 20 repetitions.

Trainer tip: Keep your hips square to the floor the entire time, making sure your body stays in line and your core muscles stay engaged.

Crab crawl

"If you are like me, going up steep hills, while challenging, is not fear-inducing -- but coming down hills, on the other hand, is what I fear the most," shares Berman. "The idea of walking down super-steep hills makes my legs get all shaky, so I would rather sit on my butt and crawl down -- in essence I crab-crawl down the steepest parts."



Muscles worked: Upper back, triceps, shoulders, lower back, quads, hamstrings

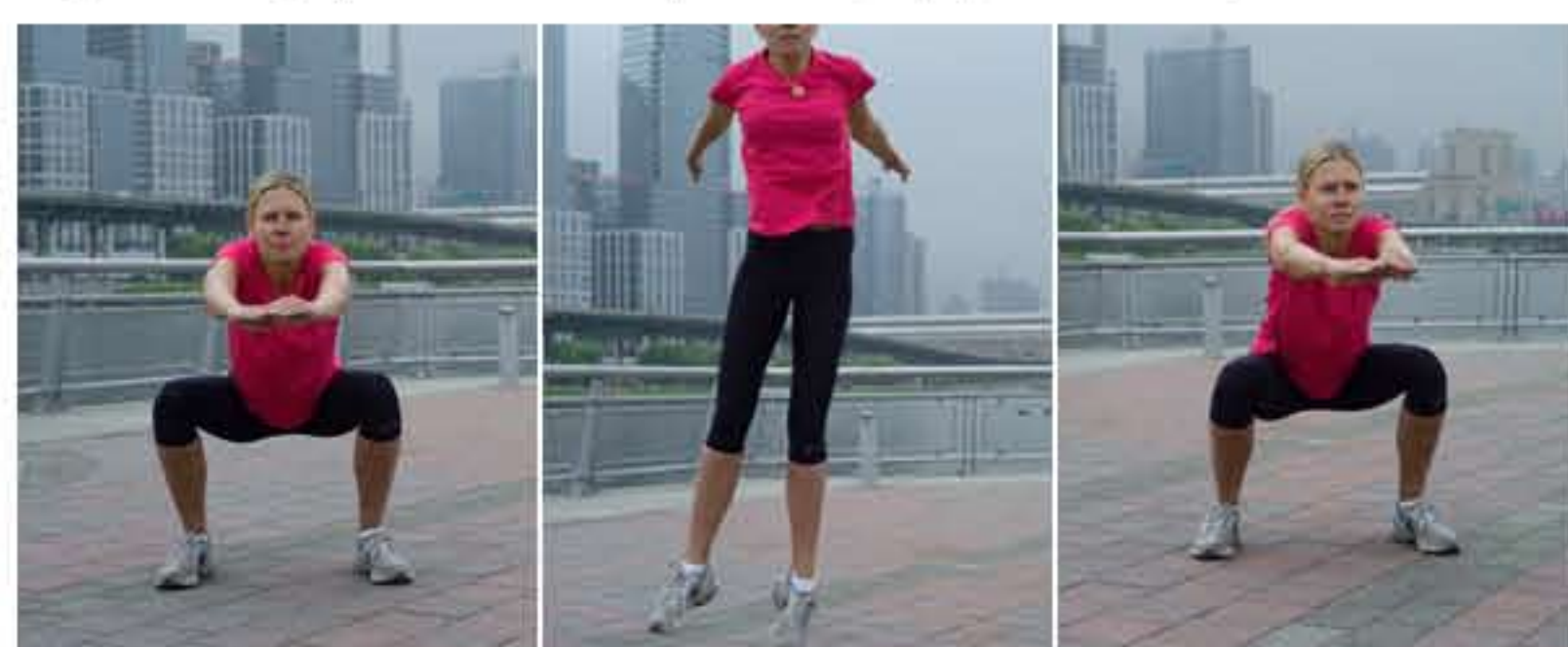
Start position: Sit on the ground with your hands underneath your shoulders, your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Lift your hips to the ceiling so you are in a table-top position, knees over ankles and your shoulders over your wrists.

Movement: Crawl forward alternating your hands and feet, then reverse and crawl backward. Crawl across the room, then reverse. Aim for 1 to 2 minutes of crab-crawling. Rest and repeat.

Trainer tip: Keep your hips as high as you can -- no sagging.

Side-to-side jump squats

Berman recommends this exercise to get your legs and body accustomed to moving quickly while maintaining proper posture. "So if you take a wrong step or have to move quickly out of the way your body will be well-prepared," the fitness expert notes. Jump squats also boost your cardio.



Muscles worked: Quads, gluteals, hamstrings, inner/outer thighs

Start position: Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and lower into a squat position.

Movement: Jump as far to the side as you can, landing in a squat position, then jump back to the other side. This is one repetition. Aim for 20 to 25 repetitions. Rest and repeat.

Trainer tip: Avoid leaning to one side when you land. The jumping motion is to the side, but as soon as your feet hit the floor, think of squatting straight down.

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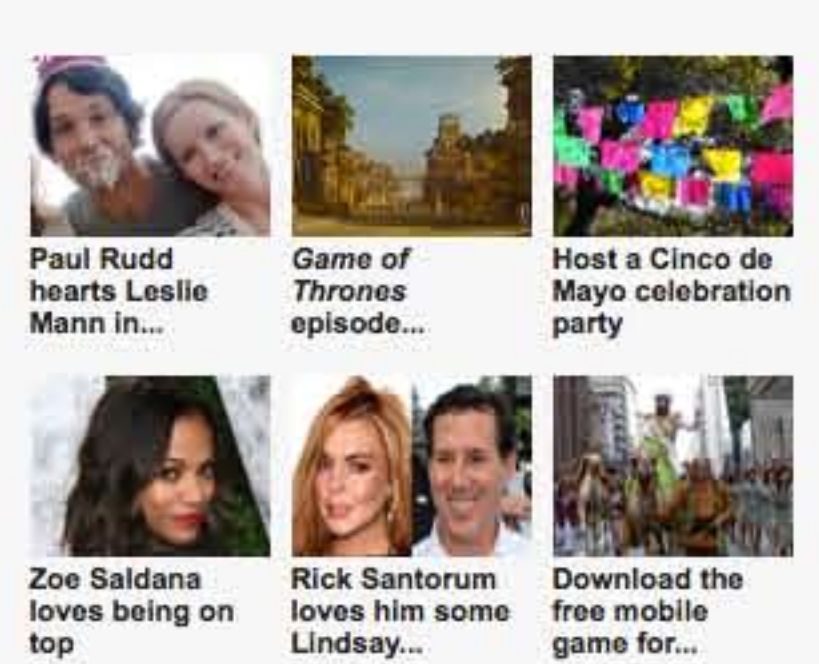
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