

## “I’m fitter than ever!”

This stay-at-home mom fell in love with exercise—and the new body it gave her. BY JUNO DeMELO

### Aimee’s challenge

Through her teens and 20s, Aimee’s weight fluctuated. “I tried many diet and exercise programs but never stuck with them,” she says. After she got married and had a baby, Aimee found it even harder to eat right and work out—and her weight climbed to 170 pounds.

### Home, healthy home

Aimee knew it would be hard to skip exercise if she had workout equipment at home, so she invested in a treadmill and an elliptical machine. “The first time I jogged, I lasted five minutes,” she says. But she kept at it, sneaking in runs while her older son was at school and her younger son was napping. At the same time, she started eating smaller portions—without cutting out the foods she loved. “If I wanted a slice of pizza, I’d have one, not three,” she says. Aimee also stocked her kitchen with light versions of her favorite sweets, such as lowfat ice cream and 100-calorie packs of cookies. “That way I could still treat myself, but in a sensible way.”

After six months, exercise became part of Aimee’s routine. “I felt like something was missing if I didn’t do it every day,” she says. She worked up to running six miles—and shed 30 pounds. To tone her newly slim body, she hired a personal trainer, who taught her some strength-training moves and showed her how to

up the intensity of her workouts. Five months later, she was down to 120.

### Leading by example

Just before her son’s first birthday, Aimee’s brother got married. “I’d never been as fit as I was at his wedding—I felt fabulous in my bridesmaid’s dress,” she says. Soon Aimee’s husband was picking up her healthy habits: The couple began biking with their sons and cooking dinner together. Most important, they both started to view being healthy as a way of life. “When I’m eating right and working out, I’m empowered,” says Aimee. Six months after the wedding, her husband shed 100 pounds, and now even her sons have become mini fitness buffs. “They’re ‘lifting’ little weights with me on weekends,” she says. “It makes me happy to know they’re growing up with a love of exercise.”

### No more procrastinating!

Aimee’s attitude changed when she had her second son at age 34. “My first son was already 3 years old by this point and I *still* hadn’t managed to get in shape since his birth,” she says. “All of a sudden it hit me that I wasn’t getting any younger, and if I wanted to be around for my kids when they grew up, I had to stop making excuses and start taking care of myself.”

### 3 stick-with-it secrets

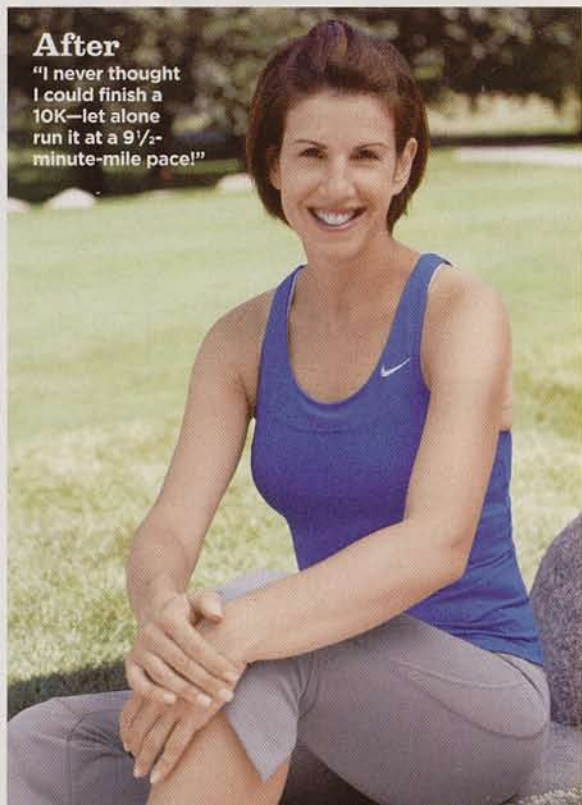
- > **Splurge—sometimes** “About every two weeks my husband and I go out for dinner or a movie and I’ll have dessert or a small popcorn. Having a treat to look forward to keeps me from feeling deprived.”
- > **Be realistic** “So many celebrities seem to lose their baby weight in weeks—it took me almost a year to lose mine! By setting manageable goals instead of crazy deadlines, I took a lot of pressure off myself.”
- > **Adjust your attitude** “I used to think of working out as a chore; now I look at it as a way to relieve stress.”

### Weekly workout schedule

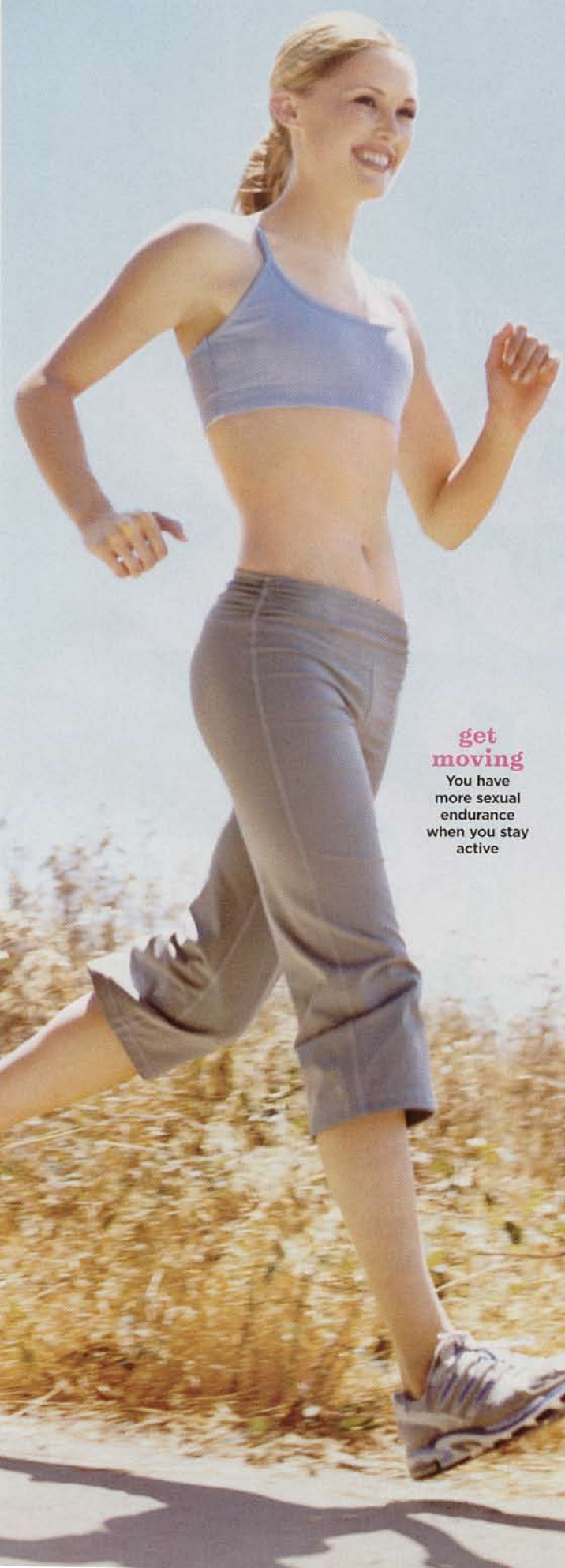
- > **Cardio** 45 minutes/5 days a week
- > **Strength training** 30 minutes/2 days a week



**Before**  
**Aimee Lickerman**  
 Illinois  
 Age 36  
 Height 5'7"  
 Pounds lost 50  
 At this weight  
 1½ years



**After**  
 “I never thought I could finish a 10K—let alone run it at a 9½-minute-mile pace!”



**get moving**  
You have more sexual endurance when you stay active

## fitness highs

You love the rush of a vigorous workout: Your mood improves, you have more energy, and you feel more attractive. But what's surprising is how those sweat sessions boost your libido—and lead to you getting a little action.

### WHAT GETS YOU GOING

It turns out a healthy body, not a healthy sex life, is your No. 1 motivator for working out: Forty-four percent of you said getting stronger, leaner, and fitter was what pushed you to hit the gym. But 75 percent of you also reap the libido-boosting benefits of a cardio session, reporting that when you're exercising regularly, sex is better—and you're more frisky. (More than half of you say your drive plummets when you skip a few workouts.)

**LET'S GET PHYSICAL** The best time to make love? Right after you exercise. Both men and women say they're in the mood post-

gym. On a scale from one to five (with five being the most randy), 57 percent of women ranked their sex drive at four or higher then; 67 percent of men said the same.

### TARGET THOSE TROUBLE ZONES

What body part makes you cringe the most during sex? For a whopping 70 percent of you, it's your abs, followed by your butt and thighs, breasts, arms, and back.

### THROUGH THICK AND THIN?

When we asked if a partner's weight gain would affect how attracted you are to him, 45 percent of you said yes, if he gets to an unhealthy number. Sixty percent of men echoed the sentiment.

**FIT TO LOVE** Being in shape does factor into dating: Sixty-three percent of men said they prefer women who are active, while 47 percent of women (the majority) said other attributes—like humor, compassion, and smarts—are more important.

**expert take** "Your fitness level is linked with how sexy you feel," says Hilda Hutcherson, M.D., a clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City and the author of *Pleasure: A Woman's Guide to Getting the Sex You Want, Need, and Deserve*. When you exercise, your brain releases endorphins that improve your mood and relax you. "This is the state



**45%**  
of women  
rated  
themselves as  
"good" or  
better when  
asked what  
type of lovers  
they are.