

“I went from scrawny to brawny”

Masha Spaic, 30, discovered that being naturally thin didn't give her a free pass to skip the gym. See how FITNESS helped her muscle up.

Me, by the Numbers

	Start	Now
Weight	114 lb	117 lb
Height	5'7"	5'7"
Chest	30"	31"
Waist	26¼"	26¼"
Hips	34½"	34½"
Body fat	19%	15%

Zero arm definition or strength before



The Goal

I admit it, it's been 12 years since I last set foot in a gym. P.E. class counts, right? I don't own a pair of running sneakers, and I can't remember ever thinking that I should exercise. As a teenager, I was teased for being a beanpole, but now my friends tell me how jealous they are that I never gain an ounce. It's true: I weigh practically the same as when I wore my high school gym uniform. Yet I've noticed lately that having skinny genes doesn't mean you're fit. I get winded when I take the stairs in the New York City subway, and lifting boxes at my job as an account manager for a design firm feels tougher than it should. If I'm this wimpy at 30, what's 40 or 50 going to be like? I'm not about to find out without a fight.

The Game Plan

I reported to an Equinox gym in downtown Manhattan to meet the muscle-making pros that FITNESS had assembled. For the next 12 weeks I would follow their formula in hopes of gaining enough strength to earn some bragging rights.

Build a better half. It became clear at the first session with my trainer, Natalie, that we would be starting pretty much at rock bottom: I couldn't muster a single push-up—even on my knees, girly style. Like a lot of women, I lacked upper-body strength. To remedy that, my three-times-a-week strength workouts included exercises like overhead presses, rows, lat pull-downs, biceps curls and triceps extensions. When I could do three sets of 15 reps at a particular weight, Natalie handed me a slightly heavier one and I started the process over again.

Pump up the protein. My nutritionist, Dr. Morrison, explained that women should consume at least one gram of protein per kilogram of body weight daily. At 114 pounds, or 52 kilograms, that would mean a minimum of 52 grams a day for me, but because I was on a mission to gain, rather than simply maintain, muscle, Dr. Morrison suggested 60 to 100 grams instead. He determined that I wasn't getting enough protein mainstays, such as beans, tofu and peanut butter, from my vegetarian diet, so



← *Biceps curls are a girl's best friend.*

60-second sets of lunging, hopping, reaching and rotating. It showed me that my usual window shopping just did not cut it as cardio exercise. And even though my goal wasn't to burn off fat, my instructor, Lakei, explained that gaining greater heart capacity by pushing myself more would make everything feel easier.

I slowly added seafood and pork into meals. I also started having an egg, a Greek yogurt and a protein shake every day. I may not always meet my quota, but I realize how much I was underdoing it before.

Move like you mean it. I learned the real definition of being out of breath after one cardio strength class called ViPR. Hoisting a hollow rubber tube that looks like an overgrown fireplace log, I hustled for 30- to

Status Check

I'm proud to say that I can now bang out 12 on-my-toes push-ups and hoist at least 20 percent more weight when doing those presses, rows, curls and extensions. I've gained a few pounds of muscle, and for the first time ever, my arms and shoulders look defined, not noodly. I feel so much stronger and energized that I even change the jug of my office watercooler. How's that for bragging rights? ■

Top Tips From Our Experts



Natalie Davila, trainer and boxing instructor for Equinox Fitness Clubs "To build strength, increase the weight you lift, not reps. It's vice versa for endurance: Pick a weight that's about 65 percent of the max you can lift just once, and do 10 reps; add two reps when it feels easy."



Jeffrey Morrison, M.D., nutrition consultant for Equinox Fitness Clubs "Have a protein-rich snack, like a piece of fruit with almond butter, 30 to 60 minutes before lifting weights. Your body uses all its stored carbs for energy 30 minutes into your workout, and then it starts to break down body fat or the protein in muscle for fuel. If you're not eating enough protein, your body could consume muscle for energy faster than it can build new muscle."



Lakei Herman, trainer and group fitness instructor for Equinox Fitness Clubs "To help even out the strength difference between your top and bottom halves, engage your upper body constantly while you do lower-body moves." (See "Lower-Body Blast," page 78, for examples.)

3 servings of veggies in one box. Pretty amazing they all fit.



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