

If you don't have weights, grab a soup can, or put some water in a water bottle or jar to use as a weight. This month's exercises to tone your back and arms are: Push ups, Arm-Stair-Master, Reverse Rows, and 8-count Shoulder raises (those are the ultimate toners!).

Exercise 1: Push-ups.

The almighty push-up will work every tank top muscles you have and more. What if you can't do a full push up? No problem, ... goto your knees! If you're on your knees you're still able to get the full range of motion and work your entire upper body while keeping your shoulders safe. TIP: If don't bring your chest below your shoulders – this puts undo stress on your shoulders in a way they are not meant to work. TIP 2: Change your hand position for every set you do. Wider push-ups will work your back more, regular push-ups will work your chest more, and narrow push-ups will rock your triceps with chaturanga-yoga type love. TIP 3: if you're doing push-ups NOT on your knees, you lead with your abs. Your butt should start to lift before your shoulders start to press...use that core strength from last month!

Exercise 2: Plank/Arm-Master (10 reps = leading with each arm 5 times).

After our ab challenge your forearm plank must be feeling pretty solid! Now let's step it up, literally. Start in forearm plank and step up onto one hand, then the other to find yourself happily in regular plank. TIP 1: Place the hand that is about to go up into regular plank directly underneath your shoulder. While it's easier to keep it out in front of you where it's closer to the forearm plank position, this is unsafe for your shoulders. TIP 2: Again, lift first with your core! TIP 3: Don't rock your hips side to side to build momentum to help you press up – instead go to your knees. Smarter not harder!

Exercise 3: Reverse Raises (flies).

Grab those weights, soup cans, or wine bottles and with a nice, strong core and well-bent legs, do some reverse rows. TIP 1: get to a 90-degree angle with an up-dog sweep to your back (no saggy shoulders!). The closer your upper body is to parallel with the ground, the more you're able to work your back instead of your shoulders. TIP 2: Hold at the top for a count of 2 seconds while you squeeze those shoulder blades together. These are your good-posture muscles!

Exercise 4: 8-count Shoulder Raise. These tone AND protect your shoulder!

1. Raise weights (or cans/bottles) out in front of you with palms facing down.
2. Bring your arms wide to your sides
3. Flip from palms down, to palms up.
4. Raise the weights overhead to meet above your head.
5. (undo all that) Bring arms wide again to your sides, palms facing up.
6. Flip from palms up to palms down.
7. Bring the weights back out in front of you.
8. Lower weights to your sides/thighs.

TIP 1: Count to 8 each time you do this to make each movement it's own. TIP 2: Keep your knees slightly bent (I call this position "dog park legs" ... knees are bent just enough that if a dog ran into you you'd be okay). TIP 2: Engage your core. Just because you're working on your arms is no reason to ignore your core.

Day	Push-ups	Plank/Arm-Master	Reverse Rows	8-count shoulder raise
1	10	10 (5 each)	10	5
2	10	10	10	5
3	10	10	10	5
4	2 x 7	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 5
5	2 x 7	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 5
6	2 x 7	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 5
7	2 x 7	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 5
8	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 5
9	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 5
10	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 10	2 x 5
11	3 x 8	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 5
12	3 x 8	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 7
13	3 x 8	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 7
14	3 x 8	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 7
15	3 x 8	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 7
16	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 7
17	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 10
18	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 10
19	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 12	3 x 10
20	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 12	3 x 10
21	3 x 10	3 x 10	3 x 12	3 x 10
22	4 x 8	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 8
23	4 x 8	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 8

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Day	Push-ups	Plank/Arm-Master	Reverse Rows	8-count shoulder raise
24	4 x 8	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 8
25	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10
26	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10
27	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10
28	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10
29	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10	4 x 10
30	5 x 10	5 x 10	5 x 10	5 x 10

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