

**WORK YOUR WAY TO A HEALTHIER YOU.**  
The Strength Shoppe's workouts help build muscle, increase flexibility and improve balance.



# Feel the (Slow) Burn

Can a slow burning workout that lasts only 20 minutes be effective? Writer Sara Smola puts Lake Avenue's Strength Shoppe workout to the test.

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UP UNTIL MY WEDDING JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, I HAD LIVED AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE AND EXERCISED FREQUENTLY—I DID CARDIO, YOGA, PILATES AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES. I ATE RELATIVELY HEALTHY AND MADE A POINT OF STAYING AWAY FROM OVERLY PROCESSED FOODS. BUT THEN MY WEDDING DATE CAME AND WENT, ALONG WITH MY SELF-DISCIPLINE. I STOPPED EXERCISING AS FREQUENTLY,

ate less greens and more cake, and in return, I gained an extra few pounds or so. And frankly,

spending time on the couch watching Netflix appealed to me a lot more than a daily workout

routine. Strength Shoppe's training regiment, a 20 minute workout just once a week, sounded like music to my ears. Although in a world of diet fads and weight loss gimmicks, I was slightly skeptical. Could a simple 20 minute session really do that much? I was about to find out.

Melinda Hughes, owner of The Strength Shoppe warmly greets me, inviting me to sit down for a quick consultation before we begin the short session. After admitting I had let my health fall to the wayside, Hughes was adamant that anyone could do this workout, regardless of the shape they were in. Hughes and her staff work one on one with clients, developing each 20 minute session tailored to fit each client's individual ability, whether they're a pro athlete, recovering from an injury or suffering an ailment. "The technique was developed for osteoporosis patients but we get anyone...quadruple bypass surgery, people with diabetes, metal knees, hip replacements, back problems, it's a very gentle form of exercise. I haven't come across anyone who isn't able to do it. My youngest client was 13, my oldest was 88, so anyone can do this because it's so safe," Hughes promises.



After my consultation and filling out a medical history form, Hughes leads me to the first machine to test my arm strength, demonstrating the proper technique and explaining the goal—10 seconds of lifting or pulling, 10 seconds of release, per rep. It seemed easy enough to me (in theory) and since it was only my first time, if I were able, I would only spend two minutes maximum at each machine, at a total of five machines, with additional time for demonstrations and practice runs in between. I was dubious of just two minutes per machine and was confident I'd be able to do the full two minutes without breaking a sweat. Sure, I was slightly out of shape and my arms were looking a bit scrawny lately but I was convinced the two minutes would barely strain my muscles. Obviously, I was mistaken.

Hughes helped me get into the proper position and guided me through a practice run before I started to falter less than a minute in. I managed only a few awkward repetitions on the first machine while breaking my consistent pace of lifting. Hughes reminds me that a consistent pace is necessary for the full benefit

of this workout. If I pause to rest or speed up, my muscles won't be fully utilized and it's considered "cheating." According to Hughes, when most people go to the gym and use weights, they're actually throwing the weight, using other muscles without realizing it. Hughes and her trainers work with the clients to isolate the muscles, getting the muscles to work to their full potential, thus the reason why the workout may only be 20 minutes but is seriously effective.

Hughes cheers for me on the next four machines, urging me to continue despite my arms and legs feeling like I was pushing against a brick wall. To be honest, the entire 20 minutes of the workout flew by while I alternated between the machines and I didn't last the full continuous two minutes on any of the machines my first try. I felt embarrassingly weak during the arm workouts, found my groove on the leg press, still struggling but feeling more confident in my abilities and actually lasted pretty close to the full limit. Hughes tells me that most people see and feel results by the sixth session, or sooner.

I express my surprise at how such a short time period of working out can get an endorphin high that had previously taken me an hour of exercise to achieve. Hughes explains, "Even though you're completely exhausting the muscle, there's an energizing effect. People experience more energy after the workout and throughout the week and everyone says they sleep really well the night after their workout."

I thank Hughes for her time and despite my energy boost, the idea of resting my limp muscles is sounding pretty good right now. Driving home, my arms are barely able to grip the steering wheel due to exhaustion and, later at night, like Hughes had mentioned earlier, I am actually able to enjoy a restful night of sleep.

So, while I can't vouch for the 20 minute session being enough on a weekly basis, I was impressed that the short time span fit into my schedule with ease. What I can say, is that for anyone on the go without a lot of time to dedicate to exercise, or who just wants to change up their workout routine, this "meager" 20 minute workout packs a hefty punch. 🌀