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# inner & outer thighs

Three moves for strong, sleek, sexy legs **By Elena Rover**



**When trainer Janis Saffell gave up competing in gymnastics more than 10 years ago, she wanted a workout that offered strength and movement. She found just what she was looking for in martial arts and soon added taekwon do, tai chi and kickboxing to her regimen. "Martial arts have a good mix of both," Saffell says. "Kickboxing offers strength, agility and empowerment for women." In fact, after training with a world champion kickboxer, Saffell cut down on her weight-training time as a result of the strength she gained from kickboxing.**

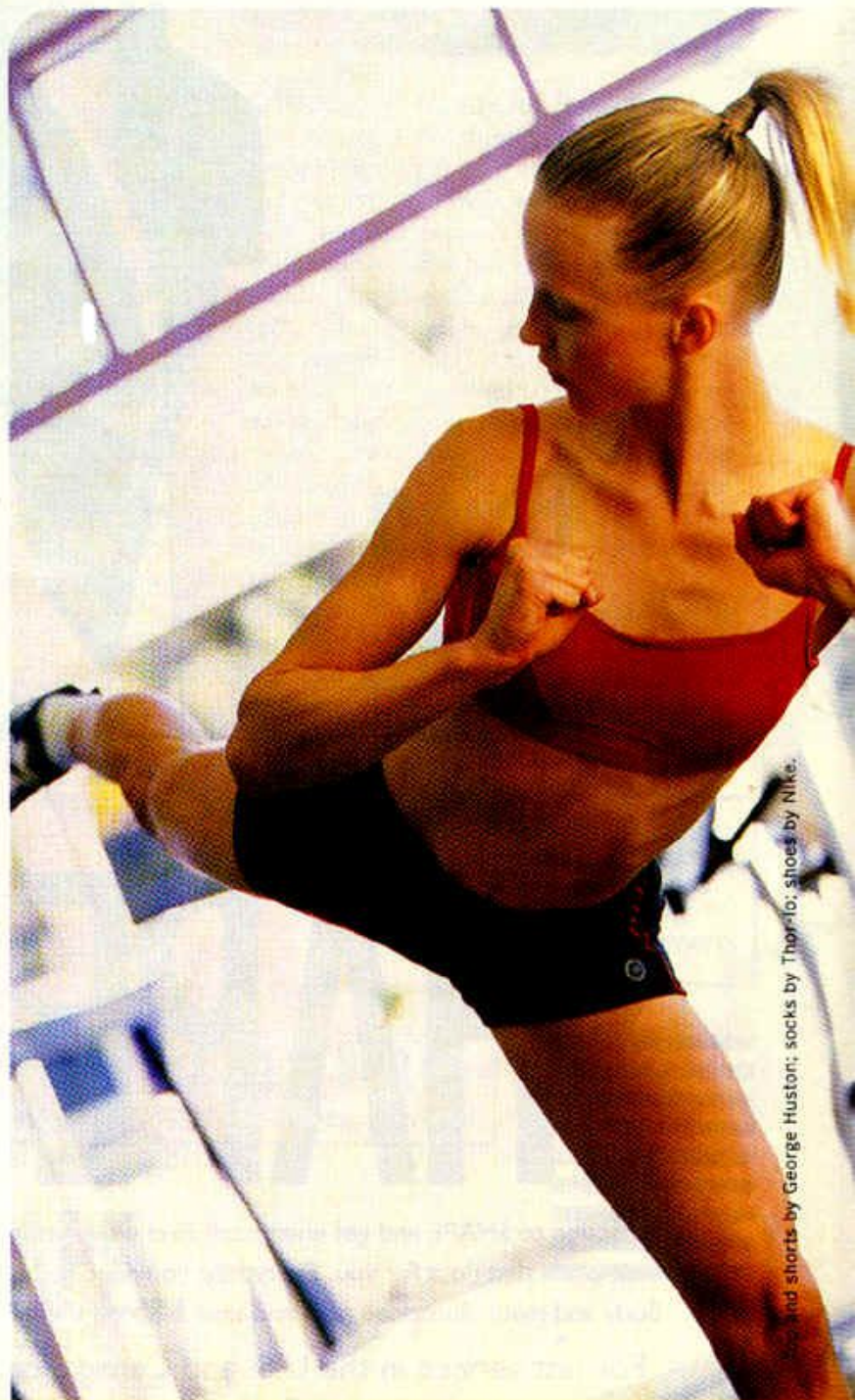
**S**trong inner and outer thighs are not only the secret weapon for shapely legs, but they also can help you perform powerful kicks in kickboxing class or score slam-dunks in your one-on-one basketball game. Your thighs help stabilize your hips and knees, adding power to lateral movements.

The key to effectively training these muscles is using the right amount of weight and doing moves correctly, maintaining proper alignment, says Janis Saffell, owner of Fitness Express International, a fitness-consulting company in Miami. If any element is lacking, Saffell says, you won't see much improvement and you might even end up with a pulled muscle.

To safely work the inner and outer thighs, Saffell starts with the side-lying leg lift, using an ankle weight to target the upper-hip muscles. For the best results, keep your hips stacked. "If you can lift your leg more than 45 degrees, you are out of alignment," says Saffell. And instead of propping your torso up with your elbow, Saffell recommends keeping your arm flat along the floor and resting your head on it to avoid potential neck strain.

The next move works the inner thigh using a seated adduction machine. Start moving each leg inward 45 degrees from the center line. A wider straddle will force your hips out of alignment. Keeping your upper body immobile is also vital. "If you need to rock forward to lift the weight stack, your weight is too heavy," says Saffell.

The toughest move of the set is the standing multi-hip machine adduction, which works the inner thighs. The knee and foot should point directly forward; if you rotate your leg, your knee is at greater risk for injury. *(continued)*

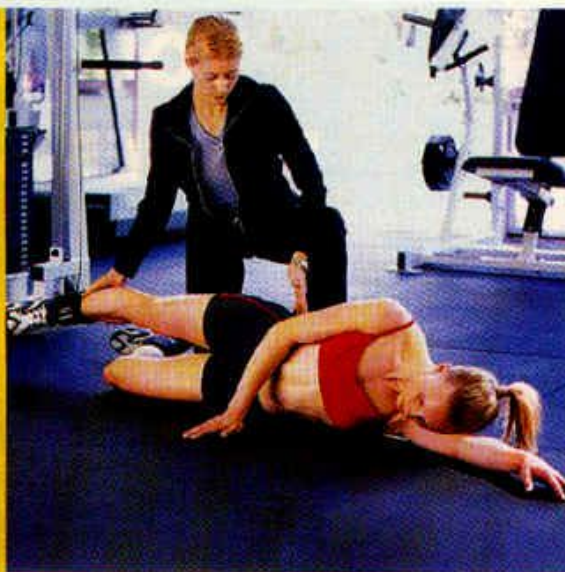


socks by Thor-lo; shoes by Nike

**READER MODEL** Kristin Rostek, 26, mountain bikes two times a week for two hours, participates in group cycling classes twice a week and strength trains four times each week. Currently training for a mountain bike race, the personal trainer says, "Working out is a passion for me."

**[SAFFELL ON FORM]**

Keep the bottom leg relaxed and the entire working leg aligned (do not rotate out from hip) to target the glutes effectively.



**[SIDE-LYING LEG LIFT]**

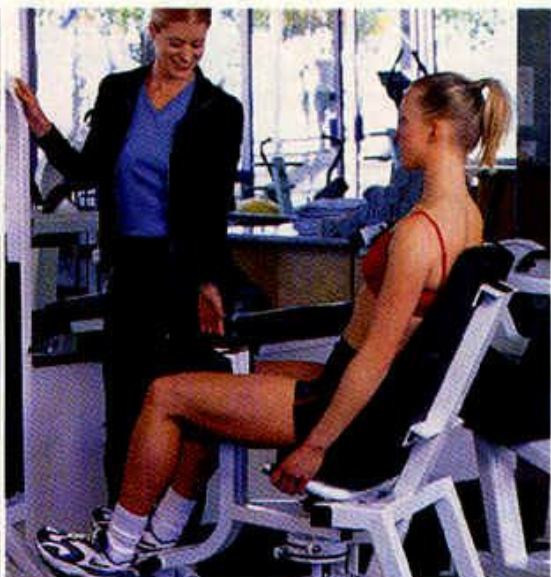
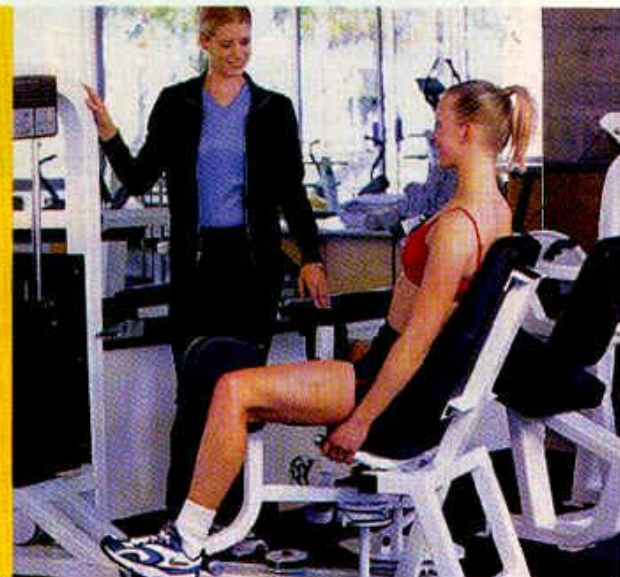
1

Place an ankle weight on each ankle for resistance. Lie on your left side with your toes pointing forward, not up, right leg straight and left knee slightly bent; rest your head on your left arm and place your right hand on the floor in front of your chest. Keeping your hips and shoulders

square, abs firm and pelvis in a neutral position, lift your right leg straight up to hip height without rolling forward or backward. Hold for 3 seconds; then slowly lower. Do reps and switch legs. Strengthens the upper hip (gluteus medius and minimus).

**[SAFFELL ON FORM]**

Lead with your thighs, not your knees, and maintain constant pressure as you press your legs together.



**[SEATED ADDUCTION]**

2

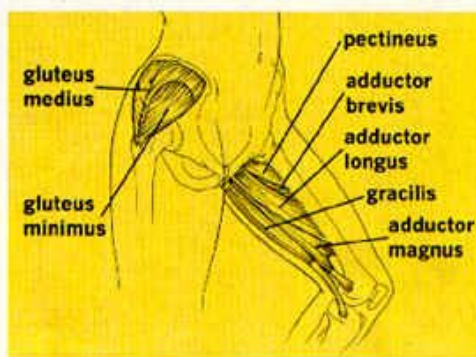
Sit on a hip adduction machine with your legs hip-width apart and the pads touching the insides of your thighs just above your knees. Adjust the movement arms outward to 45 degrees. Press your back against the pad and hold the handles for support. Look straight

ahead and contract your abs. Keeping your back and hips anchored against the pad, slowly press your legs together until the pads almost touch; hold for 3 counts. Slowly return to the starting position, and repeat. Strengthens the inner thigh (the adductor group, gracilis and pectineus).

**MUSCLE MECHANICS** These exercises target your hip abductors and adductors — the outer and inner thighs. The primary hip abductor, the gluteus medius, attaches to your pelvis and the top of your thigh bone. It moves your leg out and away from your body's midline, assisted by the gluteus minimus, which is located under it.

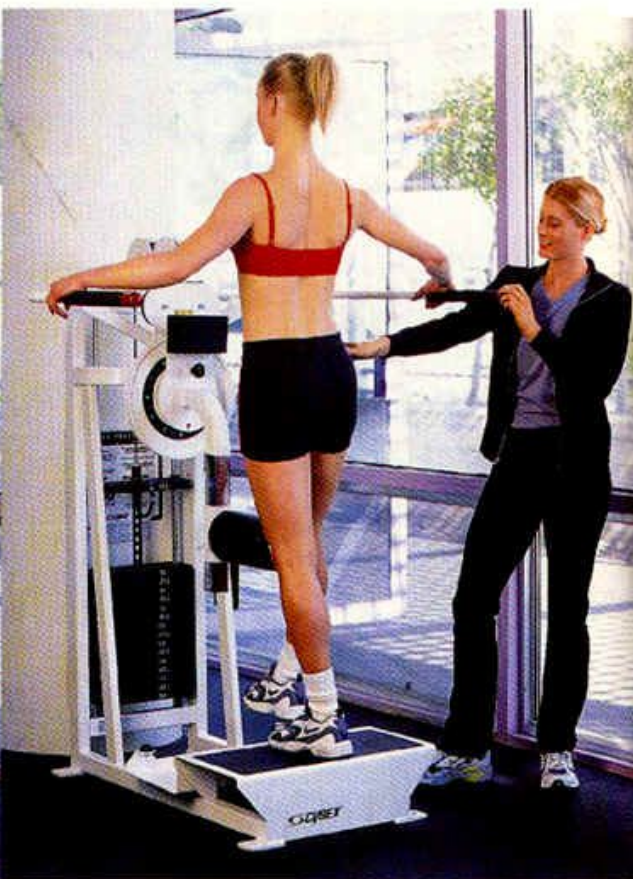
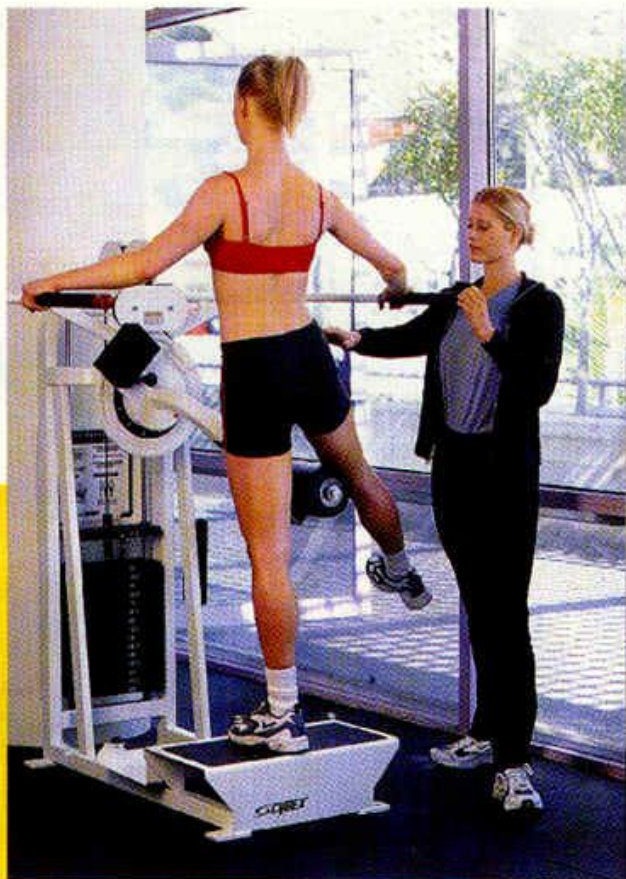
Your hip adductors bring your leg toward your body's midline. Five primary muscles run along your inner thigh, connecting the pubic bone and thigh bone: three muscles of the adductor group (brevis, longus and magnus), the pectineus and the gracilis.

(moves continued on page 78)



**[SAFFELL ON FORM]**

Make sure to keep your hips in line — lift only as high as hip alignment and flexibility will allow.



**[STANDING MULTI-HIP MACHINE ADDUCTION]**

3

Stand facing the weight stack of a four-way hip machine, with the roller just above the knee of your right leg. Adjust the arm so the roller is at a 45-degree angle to the floor. Holding the support for balance, contract your abs and stand on your left foot, knee straight but not locked, toes pointed forward. Keeping your upper body stable, use only your right leg to pull the roller in toward the midline of your body, on 4 counts. Pause, and then on another 4 counts, return to the starting position. Repeat for all reps; then switch legs. Strengthens inner thighs (the adductor group, gracilis and pectineus).

**WORKOUT SCHEDULE**

EXERCISE	SIDE-LYING LEG LIFT	SEATED ADDUCTION	STANDING MULTI-HIP MACHINE ADDUCTION
WEIGHT RANGE	3-5 pounds on each ankle	40-80 pounds	20-50 pounds
REPS	8-12	8-12	8-12
SETS	1-3 (rest 30-60 seconds between sets)	1-3 (rest 30-60 seconds between sets)	1-3 (rest 30-60 seconds between sets)

**Janis' Tips on proper form**

- Do these thigh-strengthening exercises three times a week with one day of rest between workouts.
- Keep your torso upright during both adduction exercises. Leaning forward or backward indicates the weight may be too heavy.
- When you do the standing multi-hip machine adduction (legs moving to body's midline), avoid crossing your working leg over your standing leg.

Elena Rover is a senior editor at Ladies' Home Journal.



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