

30 for 30

30 BEYOND-THE-CIRCUIT
BENEFITS YOU'RE GETTING
FROM YOUR 30-MINUTE
CURVES WORKOUT.

BY DARYN ELLER

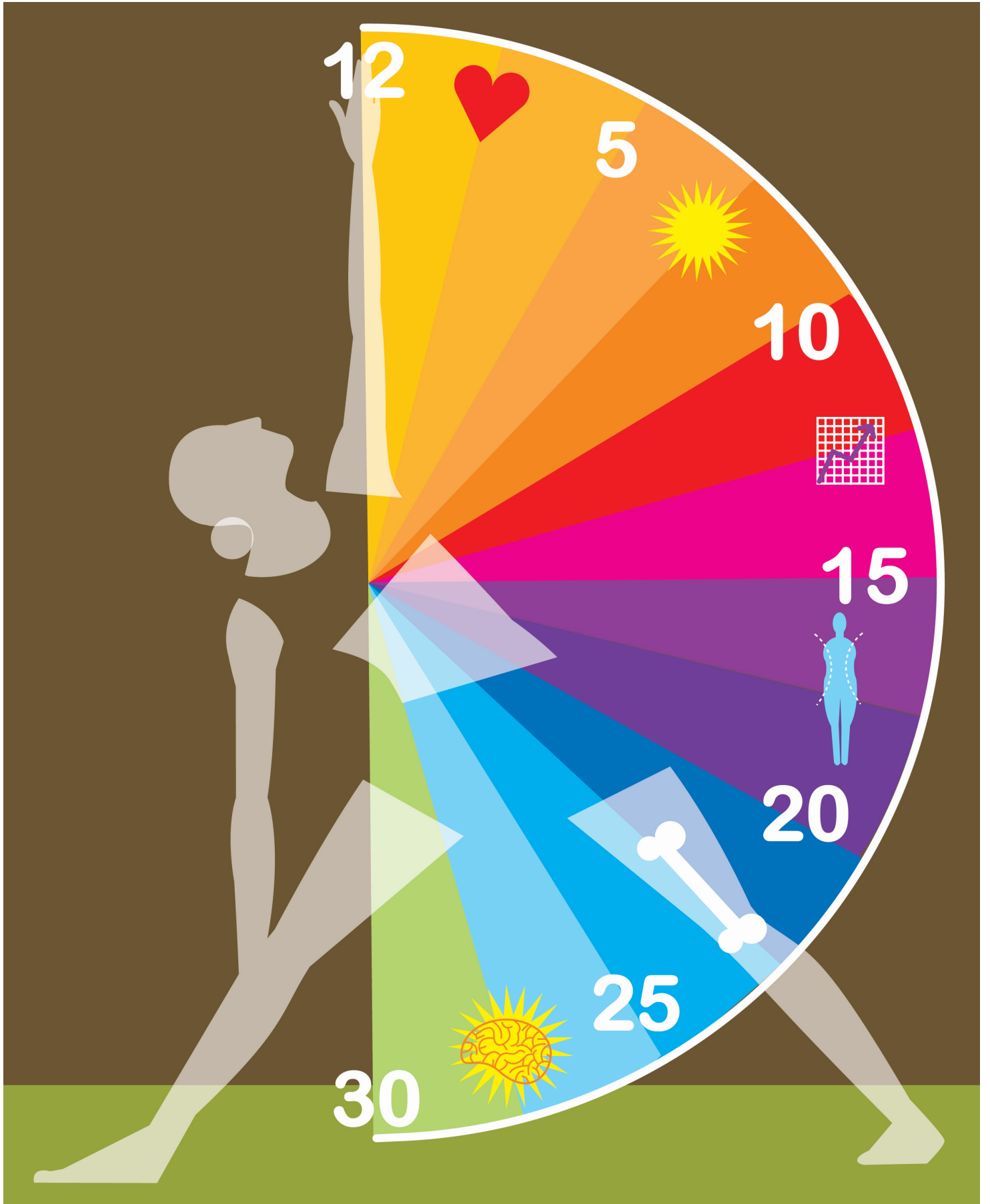
For every minute you spend exercising at Curves, you're getting something back. Thirty little minutes, 30 large, life-enhancing benefits. Consider this your returns report—for quite possibly the best investment you've ever made.

#1 30 MINUTES TO **Happiness.** Richard B. Kreider, PhD, FACSM, and researchers at Baylor University have been studying the Curves program and its effects since fall 2002. One important finding is that women who regularly work out at Curves report that they are enjoying a higher quality of life—they feel better able to perform everyday activities, feel better physically and emotionally, have more energy, feel more social, and are happier with their bodies. But here's what's remarkable: This higher quality of life comes regardless of weight lost or fitness gained. Meaning that even those who hadn't yet lost a pound reported that life is good.

#2 30 MINUTES TO **Skin like a baby.** According to dermatologist Nicholas Perricone, MD, author of *The Perricone Prescription: Look Younger, Live Longer in Three Easy Steps*, the skin of athletic people has more collagen—the protein that keeps skin looking robust and wrinkle-free—than that of nonathletes. They also have more muscle mass than nonathletes, which lends wonderful lifting and supporting to skin and skin structures.

#3 30 MINUTES TO **"Younger" arteries.** As the body ages, the arteries are subjected to all kinds of nicks and tears. When your body tries to repair the damage, plaque buildup and inflammation can result, closing off the arteries and setting the stage for a heart attack or stroke. But when you exercise, your body secretes chemicals that increase the size of your blood vessels, allowing more blood to get through. Over time, your arteries become trained to stay open—even when you're not exercising. "That means you'll get less damage to the lining of the arteries," says Mehmet Oz, MD, professor of surgery at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City and author of *Healing from the Heart* and *You: The Owner's Manual*.

#4 30 MINUTES TO **Better baby-making ability.** Scientists have long known that excessive exercise can inhibit fertility, but it's also been shown that a moderate amount—like 30 minutes at Curves—can help reduce stress, and stress is one of the biggest roadblocks to getting pregnant.



CARLOS APOINTE

#5
30
MINUTES
TO

A great, big mood balloon.

As an antidote for mild to moderate depression, exercise is as effective as medication. In fact, an exercise-induced lift in mood occurs as quickly as a drug-enhanced one—within a month of working out regularly, points out Keith Johnsgard, PhD, professor emeritus of psychology at San Jose State University in California and author of *Conquering Depression and Anxiety through Exercise*—and also appears to last longer.

#6
30
MINUTES
TO

Greater protection against ovarian cancer.

In a study of more than 2,500 women, Canadian researchers found that women who exercised moderately (à la a Curves workout) were less likely to develop ovarian cancer than those who did not—perhaps because exercise is associated with lower levels of circulating estrogen and progesterone, and studies suggest that high levels of these hormones are a risk factor for ovarian cancer.

#7
30
MINUTES
TO

Defense against diabetes.

A good workout not only increases your body's sensitivity to insulin, but it lowers the amount of sugar in your blood. And that's excellent protection against diabetes: In fact, a landmark study conducted by the National Institutes of Health found that 30 minutes of exercise, five days a week, plus a healthy diet can lower your risk of the disease by a whopping 58%.

#8
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MINUTES
TO

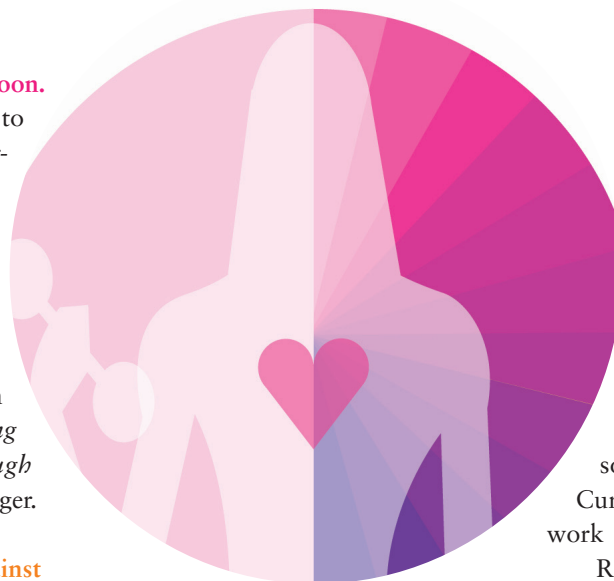
Life-enhancing friendships.

An Australian study found that a strong network of friends, such as women who meet at Curves, had a positive impact on how long people survive. Among people 70 and older, those with the strongest social networks were 22% less likely to die during their next decade than those with more limited social networks. Friends, the researchers suggest, encourage people to look after their health and help reduce feelings of depression and anxiety during tough times. Not to mention that they'll get you to the gym every time!

#9
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MINUTES
TO

Less arthritis pain.

Docs used to think that exercise caused arthritis. But physicians now recommend exercise—and strength training, in particular—to help prevent stiffness and joint pain. According to a study by Miriam Nelson, PhD, director of the John Hancock Center for Physical Activity and Nutrition at Tufts University in Boston, people with osteoarthritis in their knees who strength-trained for 16 weeks reduced their pain and improved their ability to function by about 43%.



“As your body gets stronger, your sense of yourself does, too.”

#10
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MINUTES
TO

Better job productivity.

Researchers at the University of Bristol in England recently reviewed the questionnaires of 210 workers who exercised regularly in their company's gym. On the days they worked out, the exercisers got along better with their colleagues, were more productive, and managed their time more efficiently once they returned to their desks. If you work out somewhere besides a company gym—say, Curves—will you fare just as well? If you work out at Curves, you'll fare even better. Researchers at Baylor University, who have been studying the Curves program and its impact on women, have discovered that women who exercise regularly at Curves enjoy a higher quality of life in many ways (see Reason #1).

#11
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MINUTES
TO

Fewer sick days.

Not only will you do better once you're at work, but you'll actually be there more often if you hit the Curves circuit regularly. Studies show that regular exercisers use half as many sick days as their less sweaty colleagues, primarily because working out encourages the body to release additional killer cells and antibodies into your system, and they wipe out illness-causing viruses and other germs.

#12
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MINUTES
TO

A better-backed back.

According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, one of the primary risk factors for back pain is inactivity. Your three-times-a-week workout on the Curves circuit will help you keep the muscles that support your back strong and flexible, making it more resistant to injury.

#13
30
MINUTES
TO

Uninterrupted zzzs.

Exercise taps your energy reserves, encouraging your body to sleep so that it can replenish them. But it also raises your body temperature, leading to a corresponding fall in temperature hours later—which helps your body ease into sleep.

#14
30
MINUTES
TO

More energy.

Because regular exercise enhances sleep, you'll naturally awake the day after a workout with your energy levels more fully replenished. Plus, exercise just makes you feel great about yourself, helping you attack life with more vigor.

#15
30
MINUTES
TO

Greater creativity.

Ever notice that a physical workout can help you work things out mentally? Scientists at Middlesex University in England tested the notion by

having volunteers watch a video and exercise aerobically for 25 minutes on alternate days. After each video and exercise session, the volunteers took a creativity test that required that they devise uses for empty cardboard boxes and tin cans. Postworkout, the volunteers not only came up with more solutions than they did when they watched the video, but they also came up with more innovative solutions—perhaps because exercise speeds up blood flow to the brain.

#16 30 MINUTES TO **A healthier weight.** Kreider followed Curves members for 14 weeks and found that, through a combination of a healthful diet (1,200 to 2,600 calories per day) and Curves workouts, they lost an average of 10 to 14 pounds. What's more, they increased their metabolic rates (the amount of calories their bodies burn naturally just to sustain themselves) by 150 to 400 calories a day.

#17 30 MINUTES TO **The support your knees need.** Strengthening the muscles that surround your joints—especially your knees, which are particularly prone to injury—will stabilize them and help keep them safe from both long-term stress and accidental twists and turns. “When you're out of shape and have no strong, supporting muscles, all your weight presses on the cartilage of your joints, causing it to crack and fray,” says Dr. Oz. “Strong muscles absorb some of that pressure, so the joint stays healthy.”

#18 30 MINUTES TO **A healthier heart.** Aerobic exercise is a gift to your heart that just keeps on giving: It strengthens your heart muscle itself; it increases levels of HDL, or high-density lipoprotein, cholesterol—the protective cholesterol that actually clears (not clogs) the arteries; it lowers triglyceride levels, reducing the risk of plaque buildup in your arteries that can lead to heart attack; and it improves the ability of the body to dissolve any artery-clogging blood clots.

#19 30 MINUTES TO **License to eat a little more.** If you're not trying to lose weight, the amount of calories you burn working out at Curves will allow you to indulge just the littlest bit more. An extra café latte, anyone?

#20 30 MINUTES TO **Lower blood pressure.** Exercise can help lower blood pressure that's already high by helping you to drop a few pounds.

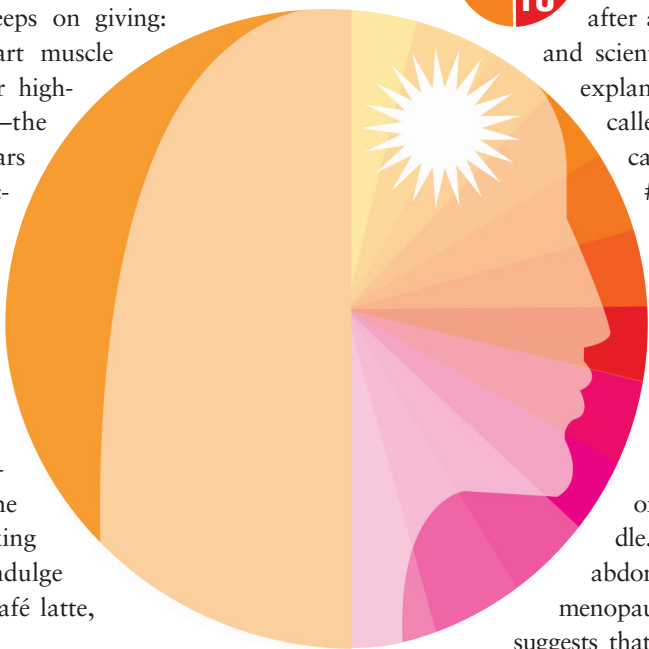
#21 30 MINUTES TO **More muscle.** Muscle building is an integral part of your Curves workout—for good reason: Muscle requires a lot of energy to sustain itself, so the more you have of it, the more calories you'll burn daily. And the more you'll be able to do as you age without risking injury. Bonus: Arms and legs with more muscle tone are firmer—and look shapelier.

#22 30 MINUTES TO **Excellent defense against breast cancer.** According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, regular exercise reduces your risk of breast cancer by bolstering your immune system and lowering levels of estrogen circulating in your blood. Plus, researchers from Harvard Medical School in Boston recently found that women with breast cancer who do the equivalent of walking three to five hours a week are 50% less likely to die from the disease than those who don't.

#23 30 MINUTES TO **A silver tongue.** Research conducted by Charles Emery, PhD, associate professor of psychology at Ohio State University and an expert in the psychological effects of physical exercise, has shown that people who work out to music not only feel better emotionally and mentally after a workout, as all exercisers do, but they also improve their verbal fluency—far more than people who don't exercise to music. The combination of music and exercise, both of which appear to increase cognitive function, says Emery, may help you be more articulate.

#24 30 MINUTES TO **Ahhhhh.** Cardiovascular activity tends to soothe tension and anxiety immediately after a workout—and for hours afterward, and scientists point out that there are several explanations. The feel-good brain chemicals called beta-endorphins and dopamine that cardio exercise produces (see Reason #5) are clearly at work. It's also the case that exercising can distract us from everyday worries, give us a sense of being in charge of our lives, and elevate self-esteem.

#25 30 MINUTES TO **Some relief from menopause.** One of the more bothersome side effects of menopause is fat gain around the middle. Enter aerobic exercise, which targets abdominal fat, in particular, helping to stem menopausal weight gain. Some research even suggests that hot flashes are less severe in regular exercisers, because physical activity boosts production of brain chemicals that counter decreasing levels of estrogen.



*“The fitter you are,
the more desirable
you feel.”*

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