

GEAR & GADGETS

Gym In a Box

New strength-training devices fit a weight room's worth of equipment into an area smaller than a yoga mat—letting you work out from anywhere



By Ashley Mateo

ANDREA CHAPMAN, a marketing manager in San Diego, Calif., hadn't been to a proper gym in nearly six months when she finally accepted that her "hiatus" was more permanent. "I had no choice but to do exercises at home, which I wasn't used to, and that pushed me to finally purchase equipment," she said. In September 2020, she bought herself a Zeno Workout Bench. The compact gym, which enables her to do more than 75 different exercises using resistance bands, quickly made up for the loss of her studio workouts. "I love its versatility."

Space-consuming strength-training equipment like weight racks

and barbells can be pricey and intimidating—one reason trainers say at-home cardio machines have soared in popularity over the past two years. People default to the easiest thing, and nothing's easier than spinning your wheels or running in place, said Eric Dannenberg, performance manager for Exos, a human performance brand which trains professional athletes and corporate clients.

But if you want to shed some pounds, strength training may better suit your goals, Mr. Dannenberg said, and it doesn't have to take up an entire room and weigh a ton. Resistance training can reduce body-fat percentage, especially the visceral fat which wraps around your abdominal organs, as it builds lean muscle mass. This type of training

can lead to weight loss even without your adding cardio to the mix, according to a recent systematic review in the journal Sports Medicine.

"When we perform aerobic exercises, like running, we burn calories but we don't necessarily gain much muscle," said Rami Hashish, Ph.D., founder of the National Biomechanics Institute. Since strength training builds more muscle—and muscle tissue burns more calories than fat does—"through resistance training, we effectively set up our body to more consistently [burn] calories throughout the day," he said.

The kicker: You can get all the strength training essentials you need in a compact, functional training kit. Here, four favorites—from a mirror that hides an entire gym to cables that fit inside a backpack.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY / FOUR COMPACT STRENGTH-TRAINING KITS



1. FOR THE AESTHETICALLY ORIENTED
NordicTrack's Vault looks like an ordinary wall mirror. But the sleek reflective casing hides training accessories like an exercise mat, yoga blocks and kettle bells. The glass itself is a futuristic touch screen that offers a library of live and on-demand classes and customized training programs. Vault also lets you observe a trainer's proper form and model it as you move. \$2,999 nordic-track.com



2. FOR SMALL-SPACE DWELLERS
This backpack-size device is a condensed version of the hulking gym machines that use weight plates attached to a cable. Switch between 50 resistance settings (from five to 300 pounds) with the turn of a dial. To use **MAXPRO**, just stand or lie on the base. Grab the long bar, handles, ankle or wrist straps to perform over 150 exercises on your own. Or tune into free live and on-demand workouts in the companion app. \$979, maxprofitfitness.com



3. FOR THE SMART-HOME-OBSSESSED
More space-efficient than a yoga mat, **The Arena** gym's high-tech pulley system can generate 200 pounds of resistance. And an internal computer tracks the amount of weight, number of repetitions and speed at which you lift to adjust to your fitness goals. While it won't replace a personal trainer, Mr. Dannenberg said, it will help with the key strength-training tenet of progressive overload, or gradually increasing the weight, frequency or reps in your workouts. \$2,500, goarena.co



4. FOR CHANGE-IT-UP LIFTERS
The **Fitbench One** can turn any space into a weight room. With 14 anchor points for resistance bands and a slot for a weighted rope, the four-foot-wide bench maxes out its real estate. Hiding below the adjustable top are six sets of dumbbells, kettlebells, a weighted ball and resistance bands. "Fitness isn't one-size-fits-all, so the more equipment you have, the better," Mr. Dannenberg said. Plus, no more tripping over loose weights. \$2,895, fitbench.com

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**THE MORE YOU UNDERSTAND
HER WORLD, THE MORE
POSSIBILITIES YOU SEE.**

For Julia's family, early screening for autism made a lifetime of difference. Find out more at ScreenForAutism.org

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