



Functional Fitness Challenge

Imagine moving through your daily routines fluidly, and with less effort. That's what functional fitness can do for you. And that's what this challenge is all about. Let's get started!

Why Now: All types of exercise are great for the body and mind. But there are some exercises that go the extra distance—moves that emphasize multiple muscle groups, full-body coordination, and mobility, and that may reduce the risk of injuries. That's a lot! But that perfectly sums up **functional fitness** defined by the American College of Sports Medicine as “using strength training to improve balance and ease of daily living.”

Here's How: Our three-week challenge, designed by Nick Clayton, M.S., personal training program manager for the National Strength and Conditioning Association, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, starts with three basic resistance moves that will get progressively more challenging. You will need a dumbbell or kettlebell; start with a light weight that you can lift and lower in a bicep curl about 15 times while keeping good form.

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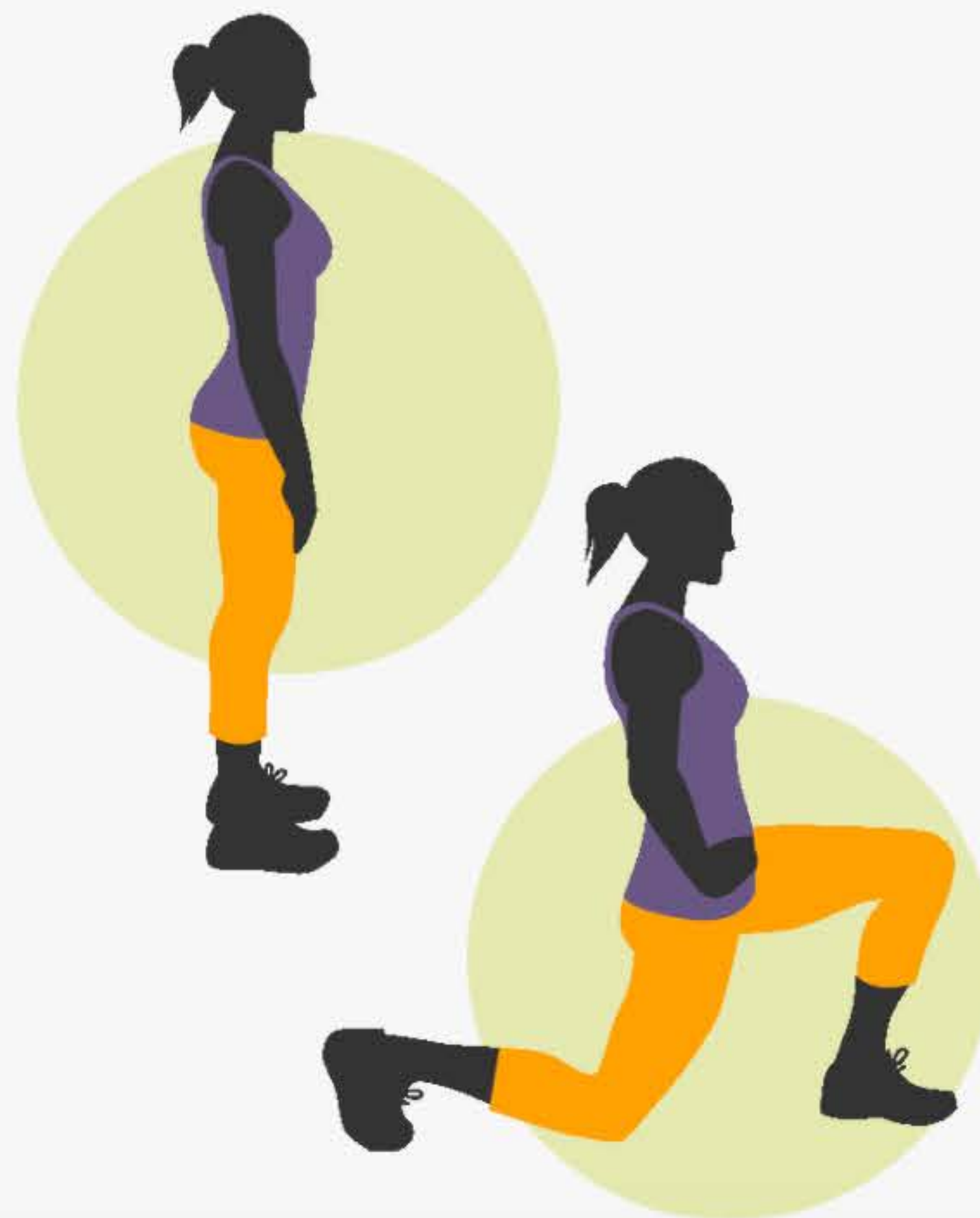
WEEK 1: OWN THE BASICS

Lunges and squats may not sound too exciting, but what's different here is that instead of isolating one muscle group, you'll be engaging body parts from head to toe. "You don't go about your day using one muscle at a time," points out Clayton, "so your fitness routine should follow suit." Think of these exercises as your functional fitness foundation.

Goal: Do one to three sets of each exercise twice this week. Rather than doing a certain number of repetitions, Clayton recommends focusing on time, ideally 40 to 60 seconds for each exercise.

1 Walking lunge

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart in a space that allows you to move forward. Keeping arms at sides, step right foot forward about two feet, until right knee is over right ankle, and lower until right thigh is parallel with floor. Step left foot next to right as you return to standing. Repeat, this time stepping forward with left foot. Continue alternating.

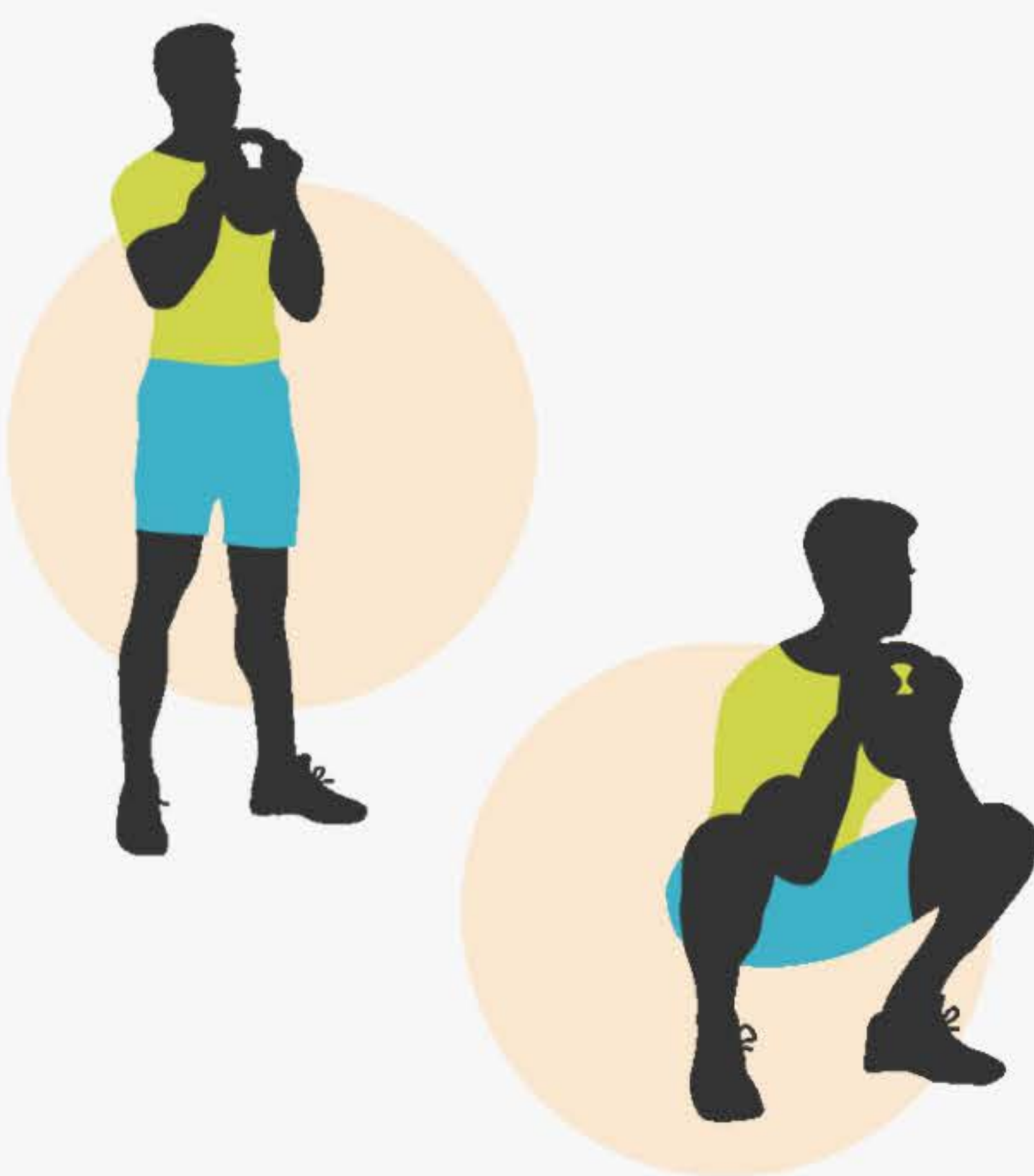


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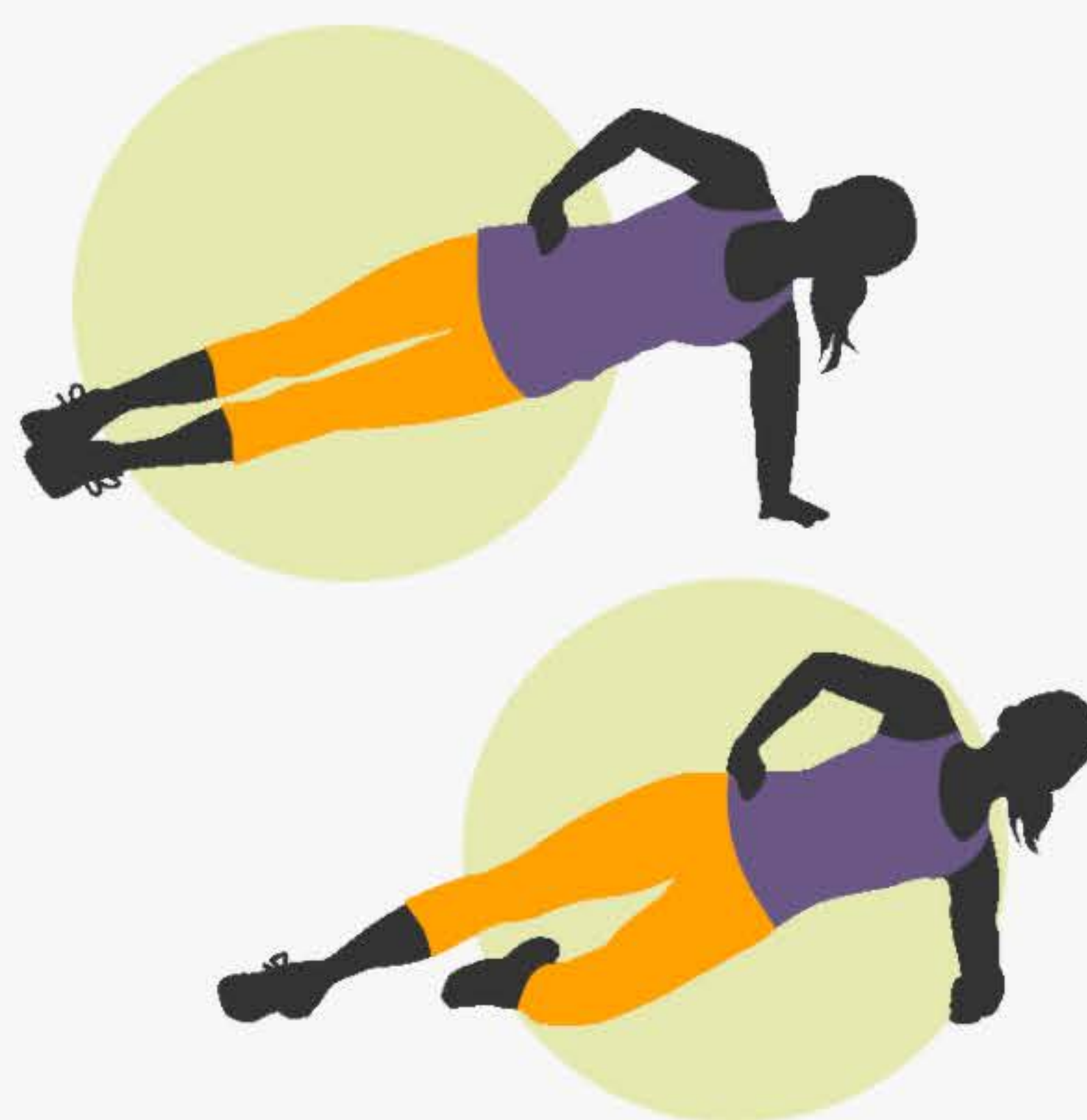


2 Goblet squat

Stand with feet about shoulder-width apart, toes turned out slightly. Hold dumbbell or kettlebell at chest height with hands by chest (as if you're holding a glass of water), elbows at your side. Turn toes out slightly and from this position, lower toward floor until thighs are parallel with floor. Return to start and repeat.

3 Side Plank

Start on the floor, turn to right side and position right elbow below shoulder. Squeeze abs and glutes, stack feet on top of each other and lift hips until body is in straight line from head to toe. If this is too challenging, drop left knee to floor. Hold for 40 to 60 seconds. Release and switch sides.



(modified version)

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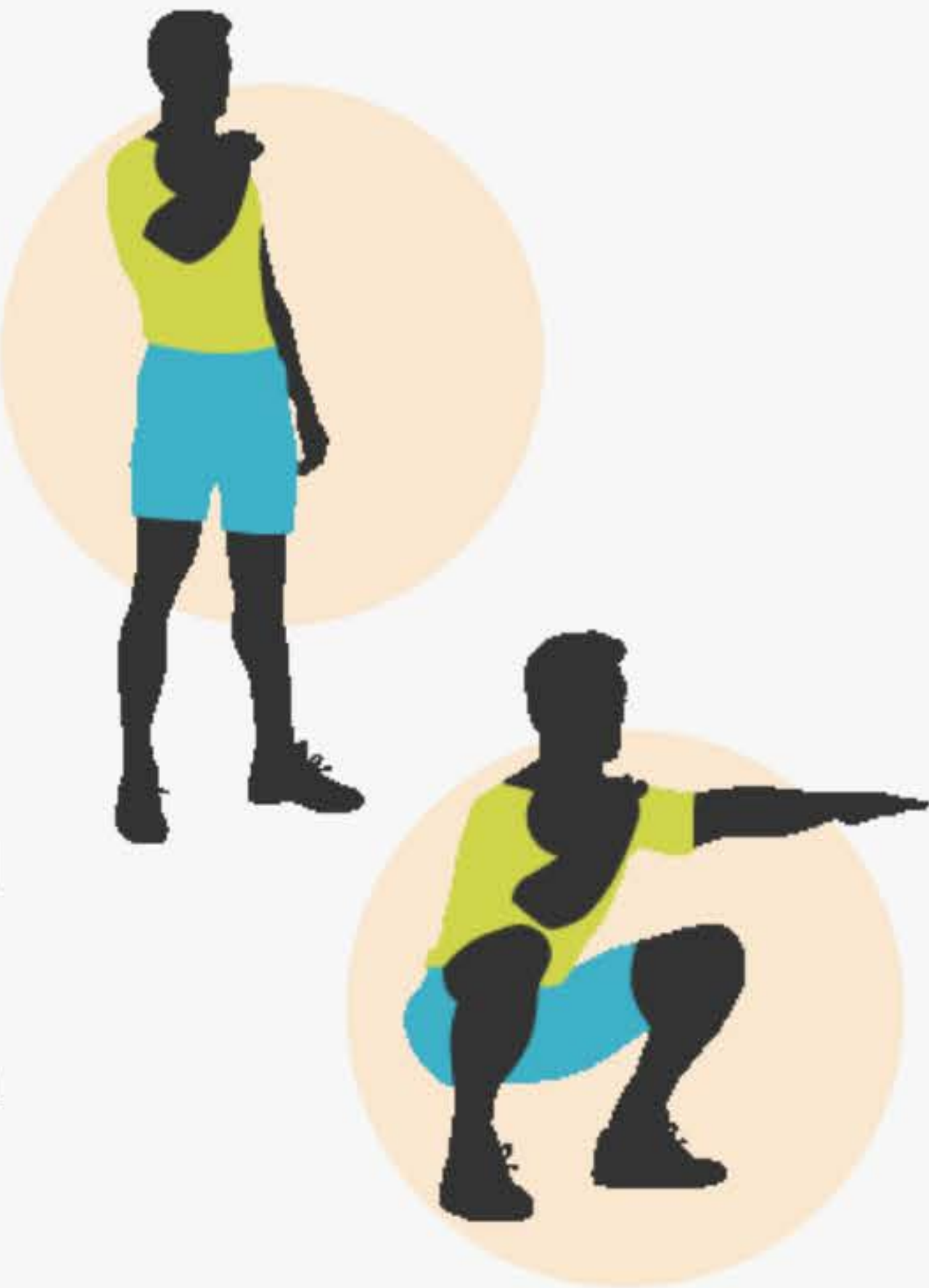
WEEK 2: TAKE IT UP A NOTCH

Welcome to Week 2 of your challenge. We’re building on the foundation, adding movements that target additional muscles and joints and involve more coordination. You’ve got this!

Goal: If you couldn’t quite make it to 40 or 60 seconds for each exercise last week, make that your target this week. Also, aim to do one to three sets of these moves three times this week, but not on consecutive days.

1 One-arm goblet squat

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, toes turned out slightly, holding dumbbell or kettlebell at chest level. Shift weight into right hand, keeping hand by right shoulder, elbow into body. Keeping weight close to body, lower into squat until thighs are parallel to floor. Fight the urge to rotate or shift body. For more stability, extend left arm in front at the same time. Release to start and repeat. Switch sides.



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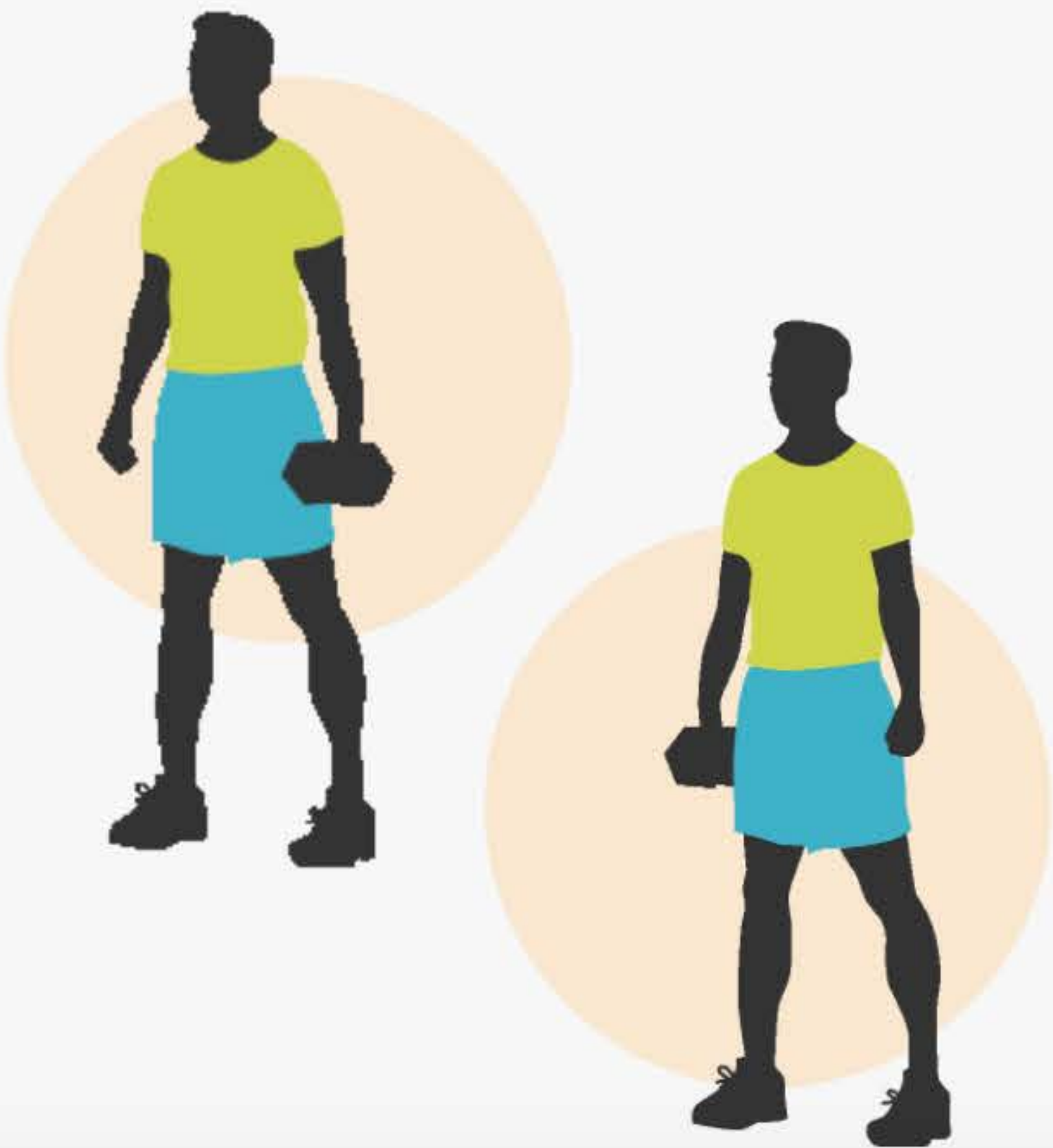
2 Lunge with reach

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Keeping arms at sides, step right foot forward about two feet until right knee is over right ankle. As you do this, lower until right thigh is parallel with floor. Reach both arms forward as if picking something up off the floor directly in front of right foot. Look forward, not down, to keep head in line with spine. Return to start and repeat on opposite side. Continue alternating.



3 Suitcase hold

Stand with feet hip-width apart, holding dumbbell or kettlebell in right hand. Do not let the weight pull you over to the side. (Resisting the pull fires up all of your core muscles and creates stability.) Hold 40 to 60 seconds, then switch sides.



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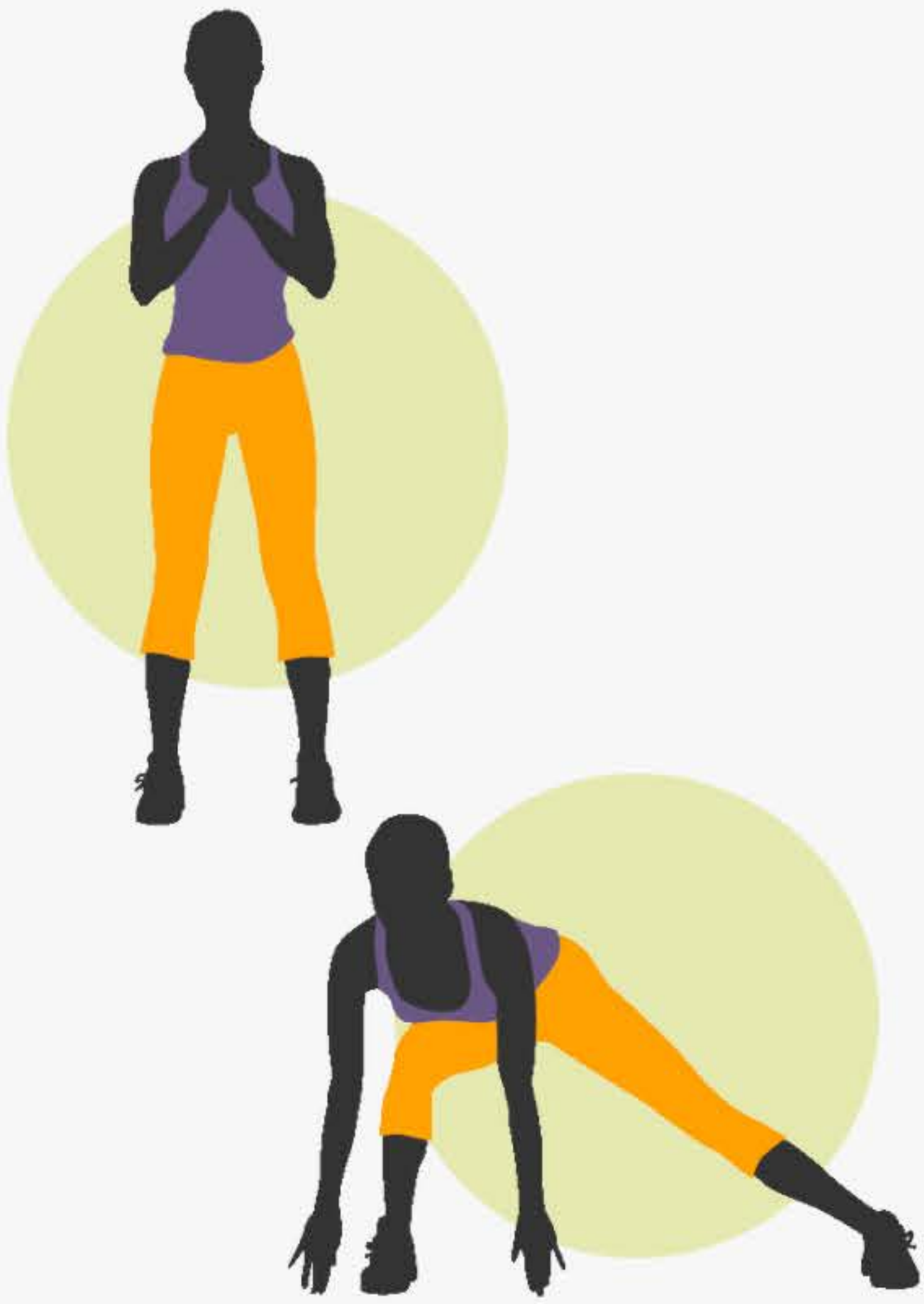
WEEK 3: WORK EVERY INCH

Look at you, feeling stronger and more energized! As you head into the final week of your challenge, think about how each of these moves is making easier work of your daily routines.

Goal: Keep your eye on the prize, namely by adding more time to each of your moves (aim for 60 seconds each) and making room in your schedule to do three sets of these moves every other day.

1 Lateral lunge and reach

Stand with feet about shoulder-width apart. Step right foot out on diagonal (about 45 degrees from center of body) about two feet and lower until right thigh forms 45-degree angle with floor, keeping your knee pointing in the same direction as your foot. At the same time, reach arms down toward floor, just in front of right foot. Return to start and switch sides. Repeat, alternating each time.

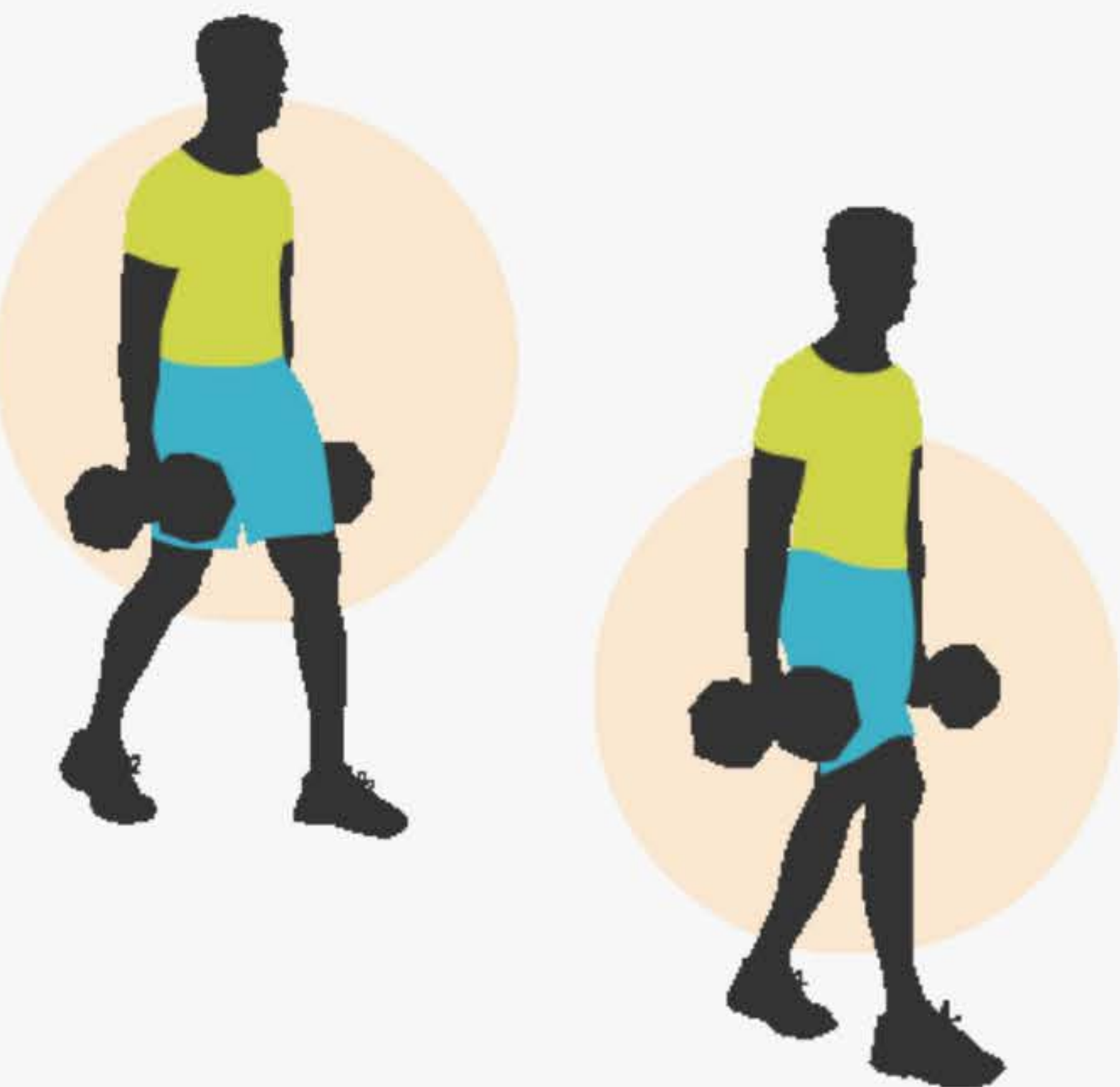


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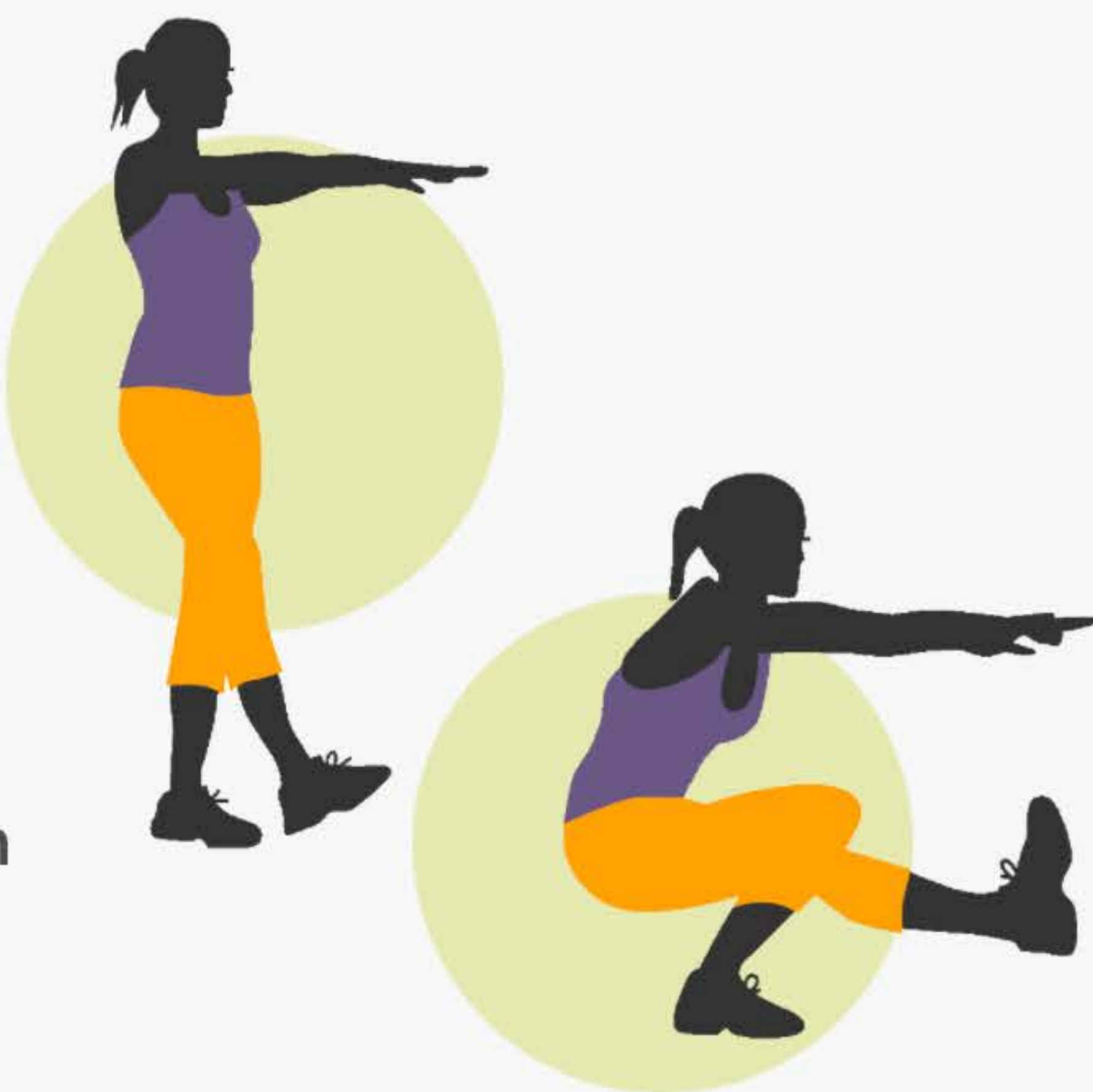


2 Farmer's walk

Hold a dumbbell or kettlebell in each hand, arms at sides. Taking short steps (about half of a normal stride) and keeping torso tall, walk around room for up to 60 seconds.

3 Single leg squat

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, positioning yourself next to a table or chair for support, if necessary. Place right hand on support (if using) and lift left foot a few inches off floor. Keeping left foot off floor, lower until right thigh is almost parallel to floor. Release to start and repeat. Switch sides.



Week 1

Week 2

Great Job!

The challenge may be over, but you're only getting started. After all, "functional fitness is for life," says Clayton. Think about weaving these moves into your daily routine. Tack them on to the end of a walk, do them over the course of a couple of work breaks, or set your alarm early so you can cross them off your to-do list first thing. Whatever works for you—the key is to keep going.

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