



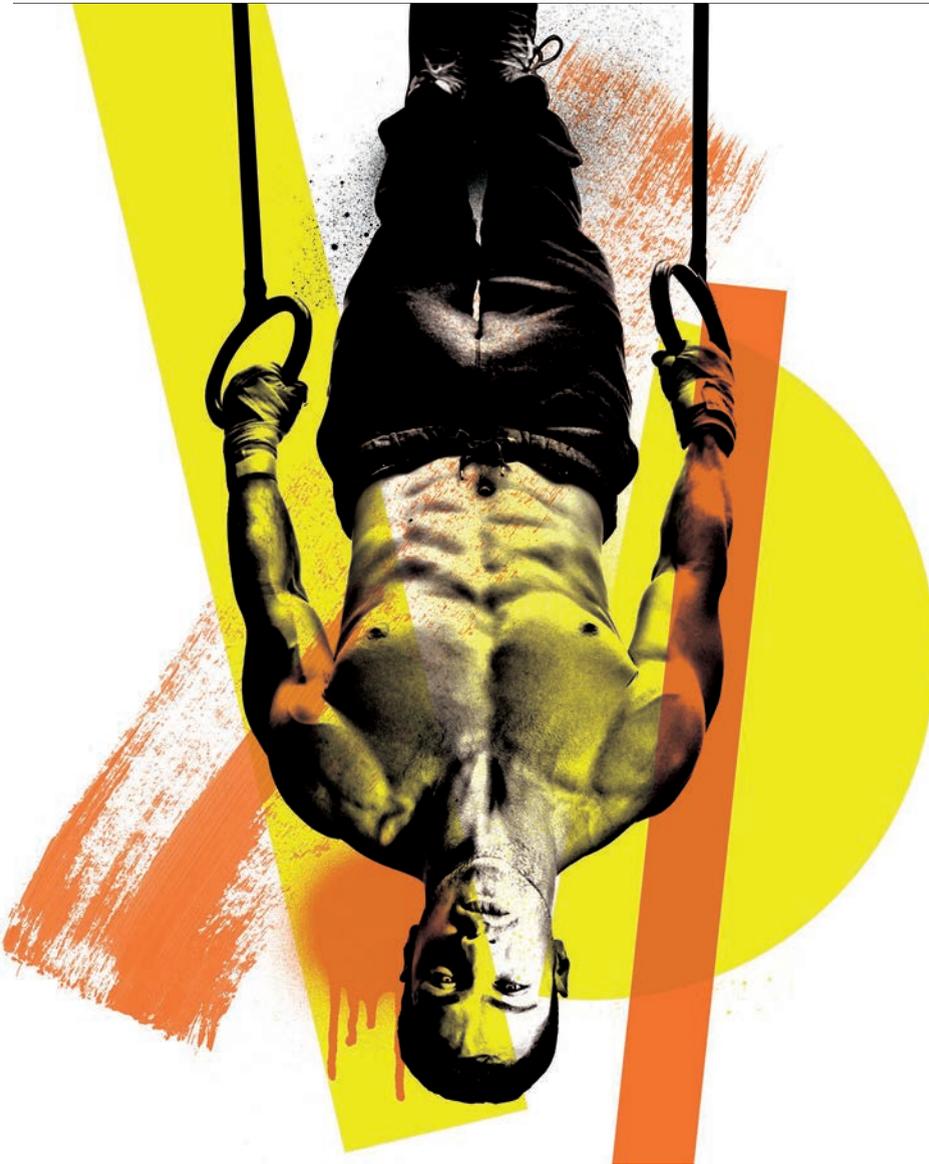
Ditch the Side Stitch

Press three fingers into your belly below your ribs. Purse your lips and blow out hard to ease pressure on the diaphragm.

• Men's Health, August 1990

Superhero Strength

How Aaron Taylor-Johnson packed on movie-star muscle in just four months.



WHEN AARON TAYLOR-JOHNSON ARRIVED ON SET FOR *Kick-Ass 2*, the only definition on his body came from his knobby knees and bony ribs. But that would change. "In this movie, my character grows stronger and more confident than he was in the first *Kick-Ass*," says Taylor-Johnson. "I was used to doing gymnastics and dance, so I knew I'd have to change the direction of my training."

To pack on muscle, Taylor-Johnson submitted to two-a-day workouts of metabolic conditioning and weightlifting. "In the morning I'd do outdoor circuits with kettlebells, squats, and fighterlike movements," he says. "In the afternoon I'd hit the iron for traditional bodybuilding moves, like bench presses and dumbbell rows."

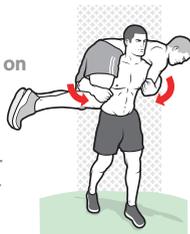
Because his character's fitness transformation happened within the span of the story line, Taylor-Johnson had to transform his body within a four-month period. So when he wasn't on set he was working out, and during that time he increased his muscle mass by 7 to 8 percent. Remember that the next time you think you're too busy for the gym—Taylor-Johnson got ripped while shooting a movie.

The effect is hard to miss. As the film rolls, *Kick-Ass*'s muscles look as if they're being slowly chiseled from granite. His confidence balloons too as his crime-fighting persona emerges. The extra brawn makes Taylor-Johnson more plausible as a superhero, and it will serve him well in his upcoming role as an army lieutenant in a *Godzilla* remake.

The secret to his muscle gain, he says, was the intensity of his workouts. "The harder I worked, the faster I'd see results." So when you're ready to build your own superhero physique, answer this question: How hard are you willing to fight for it?

THE KICK-ASS WORKOUT

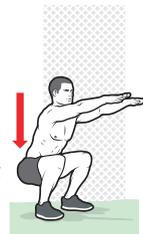
To turn Taylor-Johnson into a stud, trainer Rikki Toth focused on ab and lower-body work. Try it: After a short warmup, do these exercises. Rest 1 minute after each of the first two, and 2 minutes after the third. That's 1 circuit. Do 3 to 5. End with planks or leg raises—your choice.



► **UPHILL FIREMAN'S CARRY** Grab a buddy and hoist him onto your back (crouch, shoot an arm between his legs, grip his arm with your other hand, and stand so his torso rests across your upper back). March uphill 100 feet. No buddy? Use a sandbag.



► **UPHILL SPRINTS** Put your pal down carefully, walk back to your starting point, and sprint the same route—100 feet uphill—as fast as you can. It's a short run, so don't hold anything in reserve. You can catch your breath as you walk back down.



► **BODY-WEIGHT SQUATS** Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart. Drop your body as low as you can by pushing your hips back and bending your knees. Pause, and slowly push back up to the starting position. That's 1 rep. Do 20.

Illustration by MILES DONOVAN, exercise illustrations by +ISM, icon by GREG MABLY