

CHEST EXERCISES

The 18 Best Exercises for Building a Bigger Chest

A. Best Bodyweight Moves for Building a Bigger Chest

1. Dips

Why: Unlike the humble press-up (which we'll get to soon enough) dips require you to lift the entirety of your bodyweight from the ground. More resistance = more growth, even with bodyweight movements.

How: Jump up on two parallel bars or gymnastics rings with your palms facing inward and your arms straight — use two boxes or the backs of two sturdy chairs if you're at home. Bend your arms and slowly lower your body until your elbows are at right angles, ensuring they don't flare outward. Drive yourself back up to the top, squeezing your chest and arms hard, before repeating.

2. Feet elevated press-up

Why: Elevating your feet slightly (or more than slightly) when performing press-ups alters the angle against you, providing more resistance and greater gains. You'll also emphasise parts of your chest that can be missed with flat pressing.

How: Kick both feet up onto a box or bench. Create a strong plank position with your hands on the ground, shoulder-width apart. Slowly lower your chest to the ground, before explosively pressing back to lockout. The higher your feet, the greater the resistance, but the more you'll emphasise your shoulder muscles.

3. Deficit press-up

Why: The key to growth is stimulating your muscles through a full range of motion. By raising your hands up on handles or boxes either side of your body, you're able to drop yourself below your hands, stretching your chest fully and targeting more muscle fibres.

How: Assume a strong plank position, with your core tight and hands gripping a pair of handles, dumbbells or placed on two benches, either side of your body. Bend your elbows to bring your

chest to the floor, feeling a deep stretch as you lower. Keep your elbows from flaring away from your body as you push back up explosively.

4. Gymnastics rings press-up

Why: The free-moving nature of the rings don't just allow you to get a deep stretch in your pecs, but their inherent instability can seriously bulletproof your shoulders. Elevate your feet to increase the resistance and pump up your chest even further.

How: Arrange a pair of rings so they're hanging around a foot from the floor. Assume a strong plank position gripping both rings with straight arms, shoulder-width apart. Squeeze the rings as hard as you can whilst lowering your body towards the floor. Continue lowering until you feel a deep stretch in your pecs before pressing back up explosively.

5. Tempo press-ups

Why: The press-up is the ultimate portable pec builder, perfect for high rep blasts, but if we want all of those reps to pay-off we need to focus on nailing each rep by controlling the tempo (speed) and keeping the tension on those pecs.

How: Assume a strong plank position with hands stacked directly beneath your shoulders. Keep your elbows locked at a 45-degree angle as you slowly lower your chest to the floor. Inhale as you lower, counting to 4 seconds. Pause just before your chest touches the ground and explosively exhale, pushing back up. Repeat until you can no longer control your descent.

6. Staggered Press-ups

Why: Include staggered press-ups in your programme to hit the upper and lower parts of the chest more evenly. They also can even out disparities by targeting the anterior deltoid and triceps alternately by the differing changes in hand placement.

How: Start in the press-up position with your core locked and shoulders away from your ears. Move one hand slightly further away from you and the other slightly closer to you. Lower your chest to the floor and explosively push yourself back to the starting position. After the allocated reps on one side, switch sides.

B. Best Dumbbell Moves for Building a Bigger Chest

1. Flat dumbbell press

Why: Unlike the barbell bench press, having both hands moving independently allows you to create not only a larger range of motion, but one that's perfect for your individual mechanics. Perfect reps for perfect pecs.

How: Lay flat on a bench, your knees bent, pushing your feet into the floor. Press a pair of dumbbells into the air, locking out your elbows. Lower the bells slowly until they touch the outside of your chest. Keep your elbows at a 45-degree angle, pause here before explosively pressing back up.

2. Incline dumbbell press

Why: Switching to an incline angle can help to target the upper portion of the chest, which may be underdeveloped if you've long favoured the flat bench press. Just like the flat dumbbell press, using 'bells enables you to get a greater stretch in your chest, increasing growth potential.

How: Lay with your back on a bench set at 45-degree angle, pushing your feet into the floor, but avoiding arching your back. Press a pair of dumbbells into the air, locking out your elbows. Lower the bells slowly until they touch the outside of your chest. Keep your elbows at a 45 degree angle, pause here before explosively pressing back up.

3. Dumbbell press-to-fly

Why: The dumbbell fly is an effective movement for stretching your chest fully under load, however, you won't be able to go as heavy as you can press. By pressing the weights up, then using a fly on the way back down you can take advantage of your body's natural strength in the lowering portion of lifts, getting the best of both worlds.

How: Lay flat on a bench, your knees bent, pushing your feet into the floor. Press a pair of dumbbells into the air, locking out your elbows. Keep your arms locked with a slight bend in the elbows and slowly lower your bells outwards, opening up your arms to the sides of your body. Pause when you feel a deep stretch before explosively pressing back upwards and repeating.

4. Dumbbell squeeze press

Why: It can be hard to 'feel' your pecs working during pressing movements. By warming up with a squeezing movement, firing up your chest, you're able to establish a good mind/muscle connection with those pecs ahead of the rest of your workout.

How: Hold a single dumbbell, gripping the 'heads' on either side in each hand. Lay flat on a bench and slowly press the dumbbell above your chest to full lockout. As you press and lower the bell, grip the heads as hard as possible and attempt to 'crush' the dumbbell between your hands, flexing your chest hard.

5. Feet elevated incline press

Why: Over-arching the spine when pressing can reduce your range of motion and the amount of muscle fibres from your chest that you can recruit (and grow). Lift your feet onto the bench or place them on a wall to close the gap between your back and the bench.

How: Lay with your back on a bench set at 45-degree angle, lift your legs and set your heels on the bench in front of your glutes, or press them flat onto a wall or box in front of the bench. Press a pair of dumbbells into the air, locking out your elbows. Lower the bells slowly until they touch the outside of your chest. Keep your elbows at a 45 degree angle, pause here before explosively pressing back up.

C. Best Barbell Moves for Building a Bigger Chest

1. Incline bench press

Why: Switching to an incline angle can help to target the upper portion of the chest, which may be underdeveloped if you've long favoured the flat bench press. This position also enables you to lower the barbell higher on your chest, creating a bigger stretch. You won't be able to shift as much weight in this position, but what you do move will be more potent.

How: Lay on an incline bench in a rack, grip your barbell with arms outside of shoulder width and un-rack your bar. Slowly lower the barbell to the top of your chest under control, ensuring your elbows don't flare too much. Pause here and press back up explosively before repeating.

2. Guillotine press

Why: Although trickier on the shoulders, using a slightly wider grip and lowering the barbell to the top of your chest (just below your neck, thus the name) creates a much deeper stretch across your pecs. Will you be able to lift as heavy? No. Will you grow a bigger chest? Yes.

How: Lay on a flat bench in a rack, grip your barbell with arms outside of shoulder width and un-rack your bar. Keeping your elbows almost 90-degrees to your body, slowly lower your barbell until it touches the top of your chest before explosively pressing back up to lock out and repeating.

3. Close grip bench press

Why: Although strictly speaking you could file this one under 'tricep exercises', if your arms are the weak link in building a bigger bench press (and bigger chest, by proxy) then spending some time focussing on them could pay-off big time. Worst case scenario is you'll fill your sleeves out some more.

How: Lay on a flat bench in a rack, grip your barbell with your hands only 6-12 inches apart and un-rack your bar. Slowly lower your bar towards the bottom of your chest, keeping your elbows close to your body. Pause as the bar contacts before explosively pressing back up to lock out and repeating.

4. Floor press

Why: This could be the perfect antidote to increasing your bench press if you struggle to lock out the top part of the rep, or the perfect solution if you don't have a bench to press from. Either way you can expect gains.

How: Lay flat on your back and press your barbell above you, locking out your elbows. Slowly lower your bar until your upper arms are resting on the floor, close to your body, but not touching. Pause here before explosively pressing back up. Keep repping out until you can no longer break the weight from the ground. Then roll it down your body or have a friend lift it away.

2.

D. Best Band Moves for Building a Bigger Chest

1. Standing banded flyes

Why: Expensive cable setups with huge footprints aren't exactly conducive to garage gym efficiency. Grab two resistance bands to recreate one of the all time great chest building cable moves that allows you to both stretch and flex for optimal pec gains.

How: Loop two resistance bands around anchors, above head height, around 2-3 feet apart. With your back to the bands, grab one in each hand and step forward until the tension of the bands is stretching your pecs. Keeping your elbows at a fixed angle, pull against the bands to bring your fists together, like you're hugging a barrel. Slowly return your arms to the beginning position and repeat.

2. Banded resisted press-ups

Why: Use a resistance band to spice up your press-ups to ignite more chest gains. Pushing against bands (which get 'heavier' towards the end of each rep) also forces you to work explosively, building power in those pecs.

How: Cross a band across your lower back and loop your thumbs through each end. Assume the press-up position. Lower yourself towards the ground then press up, hard – pushing explosively against the extra resistance of the band to activate more muscles in your upper body.

3. Chaos Press-up

Why: 'Chaos' press-ups are just as they sound. They cause a huge amount of instability which will make your core work twice as hard, while the small supporting muscles around your shoulders also get put to the test.

How: Place a thick resistance band across the squat rack hooks at a height suitable for your ability. Hold on to the band a little wider than your shoulders and hit the high plank position. Take a second to lock your core and set your shoulder blades down your back. Lower your chest towards the band and resist any additional motion caused by the bands. Push yourself back the starting position under control.

E. The Best Chest Workout

1. Dumbbell press

At the top of the dumbbell press, try and squeeze your pecs together. Each rep should take 5 seconds or more to complete.

Sets: 4

Reps: 12

Rest: 60 secs

Lie on a flat bench holding two dumbbells over your chest with an overhand grip. Push up until your arms are straight, then lower under control.

2. Decline barbell bench press

If the stabilising muscles in your chest are unable to finish these sets, use the Smith machine.

Sets: 3

Reps: 10

Rest: 60 secs

Holding a barbell with your hands shoulder-width apart and palms facing your feet, lie back on a bench fixed to a decline setting.

Start with your arms fully extended and hands over your chest, then lower the bar slowly until it skims the middle of your chest.

Push the barbell back to the starting position explosively as you breathe out.

3. Cable crossover

Sets: 3

Reps: 10

Rest: 60 secs

Attach stirrup handles to the high pulleys of a cable crossover machine. Take one in each hand – your arms should be outstretched with a slight bend.

Place one foot slightly forward, brace your core, and pull the handles downward and across your body. Return to the start position under control.

4. Dumbbell incline fly

Sets: 3

Reps: 10

Rest: 60 secs

Hold a dumbbell in each hand and lie on an incline bench. Start with your arms extended directly above you and then slowly lower them out to the side, keeping a slight bend at the elbow.

Reverse the action and bring your arms above you again, then repeat.

5. Wide press-ups

Sets: 3

Reps: Failure

Rest: 60 secs

Get down into a press-up position with your hands a few inches wider than shoulder width apart.

Lower your body until your chest is an inch from the ground then explosively drive up by fully extending your arms.

F. The Ultimate Home Chest Workout

1. Wide press-ups

Sets: 3

Reps: 10-15

Rest: 60 secs

Perform a standard press-up, but with your hands placed wider than shoulder-width apart.

2. Spiderman press-up

Sets: 3

Reps: 10-15

Rest: 60 secs

Get into a traditional press-up position. Lower yourself toward the floor and bring your right knee to your right elbow, keeping it off the ground.

Press back up and return your leg to the starting position. Repeat with the alternate leg.

3. Diamond press-ups

Sets: 3

Reps: 10-15

Rest: 60 secs

Perform a press-up with your hands close enough for the tips of your thumbs and index fingers to touch. That's the diamond shape.

4. One-arm press-up

Sets: 3

Reps: 10-15

Rest: 60 secs

Perform a press-up with your right hand on the floor and your left hand on the box. Switch arms and repeat. That's one rep.

5. Stair press-up

Sets: 3

Reps: 10-15

Rest: 60 secs

On a set of stairs, walk your hands closer than shoulder width and stay on your toes. Keep your body straight and lower your chest towards the stairs.

Push yourself back up and repeat.

6. Clap press-up

Sets: 3

Reps: 10-15

Rest: 60 secs

Get in a press-up position, with your hands shoulder-width apart and back straight.

Lower until your chest almost touches the floor then push up explosively, clapping your hands together before going straight into the next press-up.

BACK EXERCISES

22 of the Best Back Moves for Building Muscle

1. Kettlebell Swings

Why: KB swings aren't just for CrossFit fans. Far from it. Working your back's posterior chain, kettlebell swings are also devilishly effective for building a stronger core, which will help take weight away from your lower back. Start with a lighter weight, get used to form and progress slowly.

How: Place a kettlebell one foot in front of you. Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and bend your knees to hinge at the hips forward and grab the handle with both hands. With your back flat, engage your lats to pull the weight between your legs (be careful with how deep you swing) then drive your hips forward and explosively pull the kettlebell up to shoulder height with your arms straight in front of you. Return to the start position and repeat without pauses.

2. Barbell Deadlift

Why: The true king of compound movements, the barbell deadlift is a full-body move — building stronger legs, back, shoulders and arms. Its place in your next back workout is well deserved — as you work through the full range of motion, your upper-back muscles (rhomboids, traps, rear delts and lats) are firing away helping to keep your torso straight, while preventing your back from rounding and causing injury.

How: Squat down and grasp a barbell with your hands roughly shoulder-width apart. Keep your chest up, pull your shoulders back and look straight ahead as you lift the bar. Focus on taking the weight back onto your heels and keep the bar as close as possible to your body at all times. Lift to thigh level, pause, then return under control to the start position.

3. Barbell Bent-Over Row

Why: As you're working with a barbell, you should be able to shift more weight during a barbell bent-over row. Helping you recruit more muscle — and, obviously, elicit further muscle growth — you'll work your middle and lower traps, rhomboid major, rhomboid minor, upper traps, rear deltoids, and rotator cuff muscles. Keep your shoulder blades back to avoid slouching, which puts undue stress on your lower back.

How: Grab a barbell with an overhand grip, hands slightly wider than shoulder width apart. With your legs slightly bent, keep your back perfectly straight and bend your upper body forward until it's almost perpendicular to the floor. From here row the weight upwards into the lower part of your chest. Pause. And return under control to the start position.

4. Pull-Up

Why: If you want a V-shape physique — you do, that's why you're here — then there's no avoiding pull-ups. Targeting your lats directly, you'll gain a wider frame and will appear slimmer. Plus, you'll get major gym kudos once your chin goes above that bar.

How: Grab the handles of the pull-up station with your palms facing away from you and your arms fully extended. Your hands should be around shoulder-width apart. Squeeze your shoulder blades together, exhale and drive your elbows towards your hips to bring your chin above the bar. Lower under control back to the start position.

5. Dumbbell Single-Arm Row

Why: Another great move for your lats, the dumbbell single arm row works both sides of your body and helps you focus (and fix) weaker spots by smashing through strength imbalances on either side. A handy tip: don't let your shoulder drop at the bottom of the movement. Lock your torso to ensure your back lifts the weight, not your arm.

How: Head to a flat bench and place your right hand against it under your shoulder, keeping your arm straight. Rest your right knee on the bench and step your other leg out to the side. With your free hand grab a dumbbell off the floor and row it up to your side until your upper arm is parallel with the floor. Lower slowly back to the floor and repeat.

6. Chest-Supported Dumbbell Row

Why: An ideal move for those struggling to keep the chest strong and spine straight during other back-building bent-over moves, the chest-supported dumbbell row isolates your back muscles — helping move the dumbbells considerably more efficiently and safely.

How: Lie face down on the bench with your feet other side to keep you stable. Hang the dumbbells beneath you using a neutral grip. Keep your head up and bring your shoulder blades together as you row the weights towards your chest. Lower to the starting position under control.

7. Inverted Row

Why: Suitable for those struggling with pull-ups and chin-ups, the inverted row is surprisingly difficult. Working your back and your arms, you can progress or regress the move by re-arranging where your feet.

How: Set up a bar in a rack at waist height. Grab it with a wider than shoulder-width overhand grip and hang underneath. Position yourself with heels out in front of you and arms fully extended. Your body should be straight from shoulders to ankles. Flex at the elbows to pull your chest up to the bar. Lower yourself back to the start position under control.

8. Lat Pulldowns

Why: Just like pull-ups, lat pull-downs — a firm bodybuilding favourite — will build your lats, while working at a slow tempo will maximise your muscle gain. Keep form strict and reap the rewards. A tip: always bring the bar in front of your head. The behind-the-neck version can damage your rotator cuff.

How: Kneel or sit on a bench in front of the cable machine. Grab the bar with your palms facing away from you, shoulder-width apart. Lean back slightly and push your chest out. Pull the bar down to your chest, then return slowly to the start position. Your torso should remain still throughout.

9. Single-Arm T-Bar Rows

Why: You've probably seen the standard T-bar row being performed (often incorrectly) at the gym, but the single-arm T-bar row ensures that, as you're using a lighter load, form is stricter and muscle imbalances are being ironed out.

How: Add weight to one end of a barbell. Bend forward until your torso is almost parallel to the floor and keep your knees slightly bent. Grab the bar with one arm just behind the plates. Pull the bar straight up with your elbow in until the plates touch your chest and squeeze your back muscles at the top of the move. Slowly lower to the starting position and repeat without letting the plates touch the floor.

10. Farmers' Walk

Why: Building a stronger back, bigger shoulders and insane grip strength, there's very little the humbling farmers' walk can't do. Moreover, it blitzes belly fat and builds muscle far quicker than most functional moves.

How: Hold two kettlebells or dumbbells by your side. Keep your arms strong and walk short, quick steps as fast as possible. Turn around and walk back.

11. Renegade Row

Why: A great way to target those traps and lats, with a little bit of bicep building thrown in for good measure.

How: Get into a press-up position with your hands on the handles of two dumbbells. Keeping your core tensed, row the right dumbbell up to your abs then return to the start position. Repeat with the left dumbbell to complete one rep.

12. Superman

Why: There aren't too many back exercises that don't require kit, but the Superman is definitely one of them. Done correctly, this will work your mid-back muscles, as well as your rotator cuff muscles.

How: Lie facedown on a mat with your arms extended in front of you and your legs extended behind you. Engaging your glutes and lower back, raise your arms, legs, and chest off the floor. Hold for a count, then slowly return to the starting position.

13. TRX Row

Why: You'll be getting a lot of bang for your buck with this exercise. Rowing will help strengthen your spinal erectors and shoulder stabilisers, while the instability will help you hit your deep abdominal muscles.

How: Lie under the TRX and grab hold of the handles. Raise your body, drawing your shoulders back to focus the work on your lats for that V-shape.

14. Med Ball Wood Chop

Why: This is good for your back, but it's also good for your abs and shoulders, which is why we like it so much.

How: Stand with your feet wider than shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent. Hold the medicine ball in both hands and keep your arms straight. Rotating at your waist, explosively lift the ball up above your shoulder to the left. Control it at the top and bring the ball back down to waist height on your right. Perform all your reps on one side, then swap.

15. Good Mornings

Why: This exercise is often avoided because it's considered too dangerous, but if done correctly it's one of the best ways to build hamstring and lower-back strength.

How: Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, and brace your core. Hold the bar across your upper back with an overhand grip. Pull your shoulders back so that the bar's resting comfortably on your upper back. Slowly bend at the hips to lower your torso towards the floor. Pause when you feel tension in your hamstrings, then reverse the movement.

16. Landmine T-bar Row

Why: The landmine T-bar row is a fantastic way to add extra weight to your lifts without queuing for a machine. According to MH fitness editor Andrew Tracey, 'The 'Landmine T-bar row is a remix of a gym staple that bodybuilders have used for decades to add slabs of lean muscle to their backs, targeting the mid-back and traps but also hitting those rear delts and lats.'

How: Rest the unloaded end of your bar on a plate or wedge it into a corner to create a sturdy 'anchor'. Load plates onto the opposite end of the bar. Use a set of gymnastics rings, straps, a rope or even just a towel, passing it under the barbell, behind the plates to create a set of handles. Straddle the bar and hinge at the hips until your torso is near parallel to the ground. Grip your handles, take a deep breath and brace your core. Draw your elbows up and back, keeping them close to your body, rowing the weight up as far as possible before the plates make contact with your torso. Squeeze your shoulder blades and pause at the top of each rep, before slowly lowering the weight back to the ground under control.

17. Pendlay Row

Why: The Pendlay row is perhaps one of the more unknown variations of back exercises. In comparison to the bent-over barbell row, it is an explosive movement and should be completed with an emphasis on the upward portion of the rep to promote muscular power.

How: Begin by sending your hips behind your heels with a flat back. Start with the barbell on the floor with the bar directly over the inline of your foot. Your torso will be parallel to the floor or a little lower depending on your limb length. Lock your core and shoulders away from your ears, grab the bar a little wider than your shoulders and explosively pull the bar up so that your

elbows bend behind you. You don't need to resist the weight on the way down, let gravity do its job to preserve energy for the next powerful rep.

18. Chainsaw Row

Why: Another move which focusses on pulling more weight in an explosive fashion. The chainsaw row is a single limb (unilateral) movement which allows you to focus on building more back power.

How: Begin in a long lunge position with the kettlebell or dumbbell in the opposite hand to the leg that is forward. You can support your torso by leaning one hand on your knee. Grip the weight and lock your core. Drive the weight upwards so that it almost meets your waist, the torso can twist slightly but try not to open up the body entirely so that you can focus on the targeted back muscles. Reverse the rep so the weight travels back to the floor, ready to repeat.

19. Scapula Shrugs

Why: Scapula shrugs are a brilliant exercise to not only get you ready to nail your first pull-up, but also build your trap muscles (the muscles at the top of your back). With only a pull-up bar necessary, these can be completed at home or gym for massive trap muscles and improved pull-up technique.

How: Begin by gripping onto the pull-up bar, a little wider than shoulder width apart with an overhand grip. Either bend your knees so that your ankles cross behind you, or hold your entire body rigid and flex your feet. Let your shoulders shrug upwards to meet your ears so that you get a big stretch in your lats. Drive the shoulders down so that your scapula 'slides' down your back. Hold for a beat and slowly release the movement under control back to your starting position.

20. Seated Row

Why: The seated row is a great exercise for all levels regardless of gym experience. It teaches participants to work the correct back muscles during rows without having to worry about holding the hip hinge position (like bent over row variations).

How: Begin seated on a bench with the cable set at elbow height. Use the close grip attachment and plant the feet on the floor, core locked and chest proud. Pull your elbows close to your waist and squeeze the shoulder blades together while keeping them away from your ears – don't shrug upwards. Hold for a beat and slowly release the rep under control back to your starting position.

21. Gorilla Row

Why: Perfect for home workouts and accelerating your heart rate in a hurry, the gorilla row works your arms alternately while incorporating some additional glute work.

How: Stand with your feet wider than your hips. Hinge at your hips, then row one weight to your waist, squeezing for a moment at the top. Lower it to the floor, row the other side and alternate.

22. Band Pull-aparts

Why: Band pull-aparts strengthen the rhomboids, traps and rear delts, and they are one of the best exercises for keeping your shoulders healthy. Include them in your warm-ups to work all the supporting muscles around your shoulders to bulletproof your overhead presses.

How: Begin with a light band held in both hands in front of you with your arms straight with an overhand grip. Slowly pull the band apart so that it stretches across your chest while ensuring the arms stay straight and chest is lifted. Squeeze the shoulder blades together and hold for a count before you reverse the movement, ready to repeat.

How to maximise your pull-ups...

This is a movement butchered in all four corners of fitness. From half reps to wild swinging motions to desperate, gurn-inducing jerks to force your chin over the bar, it's rare to see a pull-up that actually looks like it might work the muscles in your back efficiently.

Be better: Take your time and focus on moving from a full stretch to a big squeeze. Start from a full dead hang, arms fully outstretched, and pull your shoulder blades down as you begin the ascent, keeping your elbows flared – imagine trying to pull them down towards your hips. Keep the angle of your torso steady, avoid swinging your back and aim to get your chin as far above

the bar as possible. Pause here for a count to absolutely nail the rep, focusing on squeezing your back hard in the top position before reversing, under control, back to a dead hang.

How to maximise your bent-over rows...

When performed correctly, it's one of the quickest ways to target your lats, rear delts and mid back – the muscles that make you look thick as a brick from sideways on. Problems arise when your ego takes over loading the bar and what should be a long, smooth rowing motion becomes a short, quick drip to your mid-thigh followed by a wild, full-body effort to get the bar back to your hips.

Be better: Begin the barbell on the floor, or set a few inches off the ground. Hinge down to pick it up and keep your torso as close to parallel to the ground as possible (throughout the entire rep). Keep your elbows tucked in and row up to your stomach with a smooth, controlled tempo. Squeeze hard and retract your shoulder blades at the top, finishing under control, before reversing for a three-second count, all the way back to the ground.

How to maximise your deadlifts...

There's a good reason you'll see these performed on back days – they build some seriously 3D muscle. Your lats act in tandem with just about every muscle in your body to pull off a successful deadlift. You can pimp this move for seriously impressive back gains with just one simple trick.

Be better: Attach a band to the middle of your barbell and anchor it to a rack or weight two to three foot in front of the bar. As you grip and rip, the band will attempt to pull the bar forward, forcing your lats to light up to keep the bar path steady, doubling down on the back attack.

How to maximise your cable rows...

With half reps, unsolicited assistance from the legs and perpetrators leaning back like they're ready for a lay down, this is a move many get wrong.

Be better: Just like the pull-up, you've got to go slow to grow. Grasp the handles and sit with straight legs, arms at full strength and a braced, upright torso. Ensure you maintain this strong upper-body position as you row your handles towards your stomach, keeping your elbows

tucked in throughout. Squeeze hard and retract your shoulder blades, pausing briefly as the handles reach your body, ensuring you finish each rep under control, before reversing for a three seconds count, back to a straight armed position.

What are the top 10 foods for fitness?

1. Cow's milk

With hydrating water, muscle-healing protein, refuelling sugar and bone-healthy calcium, milk is a great choice if you are upping your activity levels. A warm glass around bedtime may also help you drift off and get the rest you need – all thanks to its slow-digesting casein and its ability to support sleep-inducing melatonin.

Fitness benefits

Chocolate milk is an age-old favourite for endurance athletes. It might sound unhealthy, but it works because it contains the two essential ingredients you need after a workout: carbs to give you energy and protein to repair muscles. A homemade fruit milkshake or fruit smoothie does the trick too.

2. Dried Fruit

High in natural sugars, dried fruits (such as apricots, raisins and mango) provide a concentrated source of carbohydrate, making them a great energy booster. You'll also get a dose of fibre as well as vitamins and minerals, including potassium, with every mouthful.

Fitness benefits

If you can't stomach energy gels, dried fruit makes a great natural substitute because they're packed with carbs to give you energy. Aim for one or two servings before a race and two to three servings for every hour of running (one serving is roughly three dried figs).

As with all foods, if competing, experiment with dried fruit during training rather than on competition day!

3. Broccoli (and other green veg)

With free-radical-busting antioxidants, digestion-promoting fibre, plus a whole army of vitamins and minerals, broccoli along with kale, spinach and green cabbage are some of the most nutrient-dense foods you'll find. They're also a great source of folate that is thought to be good for heart health and for women hoping to conceive.

Fitness benefits

When it comes to bone-building calcium, plant-based foods such as broccoli and kale offer a healthy dose and can be a good alternative to dairy products. Low calcium levels make you more vulnerable to stress fractures, particularly if you do endurance sports, so make sure you get enough calcium in your diet – the NHS recommends 700mg for adults a day.

4. Sweet potatoes

Mash, bake or make into pâté – sweet potatoes are versatile, count as one of your 5-a-day and provide disease-fighting beta-carotene, iron, fibre and vitamin C.

Fitness benefits

Sweet potatoes are a good addition to a carb-loading diet and especially before a long race, such as a half marathon. They are also high in the electrolyte potassium, which can help ward off muscle cramps during exercise.

5. Bananas

Bananas are the perfect fitness food: compact, portable, soft to chew, and packed with nutrients. Don't be too quick to bin the peel however – Taiwanese nutritionists found the peel is not only packed with even more potassium, but mood-boosting serotonin and eye-protecting lutein, too. Try the whole banana, peel and all, in a smoothie.

Fitness benefits

Bananas are slightly higher in energy than other fruits, but the calories come mainly from carbohydrate, which makes them brilliant for refuelling before, during or after a workout. They're also packed with potassium, which may help with muscle cramps during exercise.

6. Tomatoes

As well as being loaded with vitamin C, tomatoes contain a powerful antioxidant called lycopene, which gives the fruit their lovely letterbox-red colour. Lycopene has been making headlines for a number of years as a potential nutrient to help prevent prostate cancer in men.

Fitness benefits

Tomatoes may help with a weight-loss programme: the fruit has been linked with natural weight management hormones in the body such as leptin, which helps regulate metabolic rate and appetite.

7. Brazil nuts

All nuts are packed with vitamins, minerals and fibre, but Brazil nuts are one of the few good sources of selenium, a mineral and micronutrient which helps to maintain a healthy immune system and may help protect against heart disease and cancer. The heart-healthy fats in nuts may help manage cholesterol levels, but be wary: they can be high in calories if you nibble too many.

Fitness benefits

Upping your exercise and activity levels can make you hungry so it's important to choose snack foods that pack in nutrients and curb hunger pangs. Nuts fill you up far better than other snack foods so are a wise choice to beat the 4pm snack attack.

8. Blueberries

Blueberries earned their 'superfood' status a few years ago, thanks to their high level of free radical-beating antioxidants. Free radicals are thought to travel around your body damaging cells, causing disease, and triggering signs of premature aging. Berries are often lower in calories than other fruits, too.

Fitness benefits

Like dried fruit, fresh fruit is good to eat during and after exercise since it contains natural sugars, which provide energy to muscles in the quickest way possible. Frozen blueberries (often far cheaper than fresh) are brilliant whizzed up into a post-exercise smoothie to replenish your muscles' glycogen (energy) stores.

9. Salmon

Salmon is a good source of omega-3, a fatty acid that's believed to keep your heart healthy and slow down the effects of memory loss.

Fitness benefits

Pick protein for your post-exercise meal. Protein rebuilds and repairs muscles so is the nutrient to fill up on after a workout. Protein-packed salmon is a great choice, as well as eggs and lean meats.

10. Cocoa

Cocoa is especially nutritious, rich in magnesium, antioxidants and amino acids. Studies suggest it may improve vascular function, reduce exercise-induced oxidative stress and alter fat and carb use during exercise. To get the full benefits you need to get as close to the whole bean as possible. Cocoa nibs or powder are best – sprinkle on yogurt, fruit or add to granola.

Fitness benefits

One of the best things about doing regular exercise is that it allows you a little more leeway when it comes to delicious foods. If you're after a fix, pick dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids or above) rather than other calorie-laden options.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FOR BETTER EXERCISES

1. Warming Up and Cooling Down

Spend five to 10 minutes warming up before each workout to prevent injury. Try doing dynamic stretches—such as butt kicks and high knees—to get the blood flowing to your muscles and move your joints. End your workout with a cool down by stretching your muscles or taking a slow walk to safely bring your heart rate back to normal.⁴

2. Upper/Lower Splits

You'll do four muscle-strengthening sessions in this sample workout plan: two upper-body and two lower-body days per week. Stick to the same exercises for each of those workouts, gradually boosting the weights and reps as you grow stronger.

3. Progressive Overload

Romano recommended progressive overload, or doing the same exercises but challenging yourself with heavier weights or more reps. Start with 10 reps for three sets, with a minute of rest between each set for each exercise.

Different variables—like your age or physical activity level—can affect how many reps you do and the weight you use as a beginner.⁵ The key is to increase your weight if an exercise feels too easy so you can challenge your muscles.

4. Stretching

Some people may go straight into exercise without stretching before or after. Flexibility is key, however, for maintaining the range of motion in your joints and preventing injuries.⁶

Hold each of the following stretches for 30 seconds and then repeat on the opposite side:

- a. Calf stretch: Steady yourself against a wall, flexing your right foot upward so your toes rest against the wall. Move closer to the wall until you feel a stretch.
- b. Hamstring stretch: Lie down on the floor next to a wall. Raise your right leg, resting your heel against the wall. Straighten your leg until you feel a stretch.
- c. Hip flexor stretch: Place a towel under your left knee, kneeling on the floor. Place your right foot in front of you, bending your right knee. Shift your hips forward until you feel a stretch, placing your weight onto your right leg.
- d. Shoulder stretch: Hold your right arm over your chest with your left arm.
- e. Quad stretch: Steady yourself by holding on to a wall or the back of a chair. Grab your right ankle, pulling your heel up and back to your butt. Keep your knees pressed together.

BEST EXERCISES WORKOUT GYM FOR A WEEK

1. Monday: Cardio

Aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity, such as biking, jogging, running, and walking. During moderate-intensity exercise, you'll be able to hold a conversation while exercising. Vigorous intensity, in contrast, means that you can only say a few words without pausing.⁷

You can also measure exercise intensity with maximum and target heart rates. A good rule of thumb for finding your maximum heart rate is subtracting your age from 220. Your target heart rate for moderate exercise falls between 50 and 70% of your maximum rate. In comparison, your target heart rate for vigorous exercise falls between 70 and 85% of your maximum rate.⁸

Steady-state cardio (endurance workouts) improve the stamina of your heart and lungs and reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Your body learns to move oxygen and nutrients into your muscles more efficiently while transporting waste out.⁹ As a result, those exercises will become easier over time, so you'll want to increase your pace gradually.

2. Tuesday: Lower Body

With four compound lifts, your first muscle-strengthening session of the week will target your lower body, including your hamstrings, glutes, and quads. Compound lifts are exercises that use multiple muscle groups. A deadlift, for example, works your lower body and your arm and core muscles.

Do 10 reps for three sets, with a minute of rest between each set, of the following exercises:

Deadlifts: Place your feet shoulder-width apart, push your butt back, bend your knees slightly, and bend forward, keeping your back straight. Grasp a barbell or pair of dumbbells with your hands. Lift the weights by driving your hips forward while keeping your back flat. Slowly lower the weights back to the floor.

Hip thrusts: Sit on the ground with your shoulders on a bench or stable chair behind you. Keep your feet planted on the ground, and then push your hips up. Squeeze your glutes until your knees are at a 90-degree angle. Lower your hips back to the ground.

Lunges: Stand in a split stance, so one foot is a few feet in front of the other. Keep your torso straight, and then bend your knees until your back knee is a few inches from the floor and your

front thigh is parallel to the floor. Push through your heels to return to the starting position. Repeat this move on the opposite sides.

Squats: Lower yourself like you are sitting in a chair. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart and your feet flat on the floor. Push back up to standing.

Make sure to perfect your form before adding weights to avoid injury. Add just enough weight so your last couple of reps leave your muscles burning and your heart pumping.

3. Wednesday: Upper Body and Core

Your legs, which are likely feeling sore, will get a break since you'll be focusing on your arms today. You'll target your biceps, triceps, and chest muscles with these moves:

Bicep curl: Hold a dumbbell in each hand or grasp a barbell with both hands. Let your elbows rest at your sides with your forearms extended out parallel to the floor. Bend your elbows to bring the weight to your shoulders and then return to the start position.

Chest press: Lie back on a bench with your feet flat on the floor, holding a dumbbell in each hand or a barbell in both. Keep your arms perpendicular to your body and palms facing forward. Extend your elbows, pushing the weight up. Lower the weight to return to the starting position.

Tricep dip: Sit on a chair or bench and then grip the edge next to your hips. Slide your butt off the chair and lower yourself so your elbows are bent at a 45- or 90-degree angle. Push yourself back to the starting position.

Perform 10 reps of each exercise for three sets with one minute of rest in between each set. Finish this session with a quick core circuit. Pick some of your core moves—such as crunches, planks, and Russian twists—and do each one for 30 seconds with 10–15 seconds off. Repeat the exercises until you hit 10–15 minutes.

4. Thursday: Active Rest and Recovery

Give your body a chance to recover and recharge. Muscle-strengthening activities create tiny microtears in your muscle fibers, leaving your muscles achy and sore. That may sound alarming, but it actually means your muscles will grow back stronger than before. Not allowing your muscles to recover heightens your injury risk and prevents your muscles from strengthening.¹⁰

You may get some form of movement in, even on off days, if you are not too sore or tired. Active rest might include walking and stretching, which relieves post-workout muscle tightness.¹⁰

5. Friday: Lower Body With a Focus on Glutes

This lower body session will focus on your glutes. Warm up your glutes with five resistance band exercises, such as bridges, clamshells, and squats, for three rounds.

You'll move on to weighted exercises once you activate your glutes. Romano recommended doing 10 reps for three sets of hinge movements, including deadlifts, hip thrusts, and single-legged hip thrusts. Those exercises target your glutes and hamstrings.

6. Saturday: Upper Body

Focus on your back and shoulders for your final workout of the week. You'll want to fire up your muscles before jumping into the weights. Try doing three sets of 10 reps each of push-ups and pull-ups. You can modify with incline push-ups and assisted pull-ups until you build more strength.

You'll then complete five weighted exercises for 10 reps and three sets. Those exercises include:

Dumbbell single-arm row: Place one hand under your shoulder, arm straight, on a bench. Rest your corresponding knee on the bench, keeping your other leg out to the side and your foot flat on the floor. Hold a dumbbell in your other hand, rowing your elbow up to your side until it's parallel to the floor. Lower and repeat on the other side.

Lat pull down: Grab the bar of a cable machine with your palms facing away and shoulder-width apart. Make sure you are seated on a bench or kneeling on the floor. Pull the bar down to your chest before returning slowly to the starting position.

Lateral raise: Standing or sitting with a dumbbell in each hand and arms at your sides, engage your core and slowly lift the weights out to the side until your arms are parallel to the floor. Slowly return to the starting position.

Reverse fly: With your feet shoulder-width apart, bend slightly at your waist, holding a dumbbell in each hand. Raise both arms out to the side, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Return to the starting position.

Shoulder press: Either seated or standing, hold a dumbbell in each hand at shoulder height. Keep your palms facing away and elbows bent at a 90-degree angle. Press the weights up until your arms are straight and the weights touch overhead. Slowly lower to the starting position.

7. Sunday: Rest and Recovery Day

Celebrate your week of hard work by giving your body time to recover. Try yoga or stretching to prevent your muscles from getting too stiff and sore.

It's also OK to take a complete rest day. Both active and relaxed days off have a place in your weekly routine, whether that's reading a book on the couch or watching television. What matters most is that you pay attention to your body and how you feel.

GYM TIPS

It can be difficult to stick with a regular workout routine. Here are some ways to make physical activity a consistent habit:

1. Invite your friends: Make a plan to meet up with a friend to work out together, which can keep you accountable.
2. Make exercise fun: The best way to stick to a workout plan is to find something you enjoy. This sample weekly workout schedule can be a good starting point for how to vary your workouts, but incorporate your favorite activities.
3. Schedule your workouts: Block out about 30–45 minutes during the day so you know you'll always have time to exercise.
4. Track your progress: Start a journal in which you write down how far you bike, jog, or walk or how much weight you lift. Seeing your progress can be motivation to keep moving forward.
5. Try a workout class: Sign up for a Pilates or Zumba class in your area to try something new.

The Ultimate 7 Day Gym Diet Plan

Gym Diet Plan Chart – Day 1

Breakfast : Oats Banana Pancakes with Protein Shake

Lunch : Multigrain roti along with palak chicken and Avocado bell pepper salad

Pre-Workout Snack : Bananas

Dinner(Post-Workout) : Brown rice, peas paneer curry, sprouts vegetable salad

Gym Diet Plan Chart – Day 2

Breakfast : Oatmeal with Greek Yogurt & Seasonal fruits Mango Juice

Lunch : Multigrain roti, fish curry, vegetable salad

Pre-Workout Snack : Toast with Jam

Dinner(Post-Workout) : Broken wheat khichidi along with carrot raita, egg white, and vegetable salad

Gym Diet Plan Chart – Day 3

Breakfast : Poached Eggs, Whole Grain Toast, Protein Shake

Lunch : Quinoa upma, chicken and broccoli salad

Pre-Workout Snack : Mixed Nuts & Dried Fruits

Dinner (Post-Workout) : Lean Beef and vegetable curry, brown rice, cucumber raita, Baby Potatoes, Chocolate Milk

Gym Diet Plan Chart – Day 4

Breakfast : Oatmeal with Honey Apple Juice

Lunch : Grilled Chicken Salad Whole Grain Bread

Pre-Workout Snack : Toast with Peanut Butter

Dinner (Post-Workout) : Methi Chicken, Brown Rice, Broccoli, Protein Shake

Gym Diet Plan Chart – Day 5

Breakfast : Scrambled Egg, Whole Grain Toast, Smoothie

Lunch : Grilled chicken vegetable roti rolls, Green Salad

Pre-Workout Snack : Mixed Nuts & Dried Fruits

Dinner (Post-Workout) : Chicken Stir Fry Spring Onion, Peppers & Broccoli, Chocolate Milk

Gym Diet Plan Chart – Day 6

Breakfast : Oatmeal, Whole Grain Toast, Orange Juice

Lunch : Whole Grain Chicken Wrap, Black Beans, Peppers & Greek Yogurt

Pre-Workout Snack : Apple with peanut butter

Dinner (Post-Workout) : Keema bhurji and multigrain rotiLean Beef Mince, Sweet Potato, Protein Shake

Gym Diet Plan Chart – Day 7

Breakfast : Oatmeal with Nuts, Smoothie

Lunch : Whole wheat pasta with chicken and Green Salad

Pre-Workout Snack : Granola or Cereal

Dinner (Post-Workout) : Fish curry, boiled green peas salad, Brown Rice, Garden Peas, Milk