

Chest Exercise

Barbell bench Press

You can generate the most power with barbell lifts, so the standard barbell bench allows you to move the most weight. It's also an easier lift to control than pressing with heavy dumbbells. The exercise is easy to spot and relatively easy to learn (if not master). There are plenty of bench-press programs you can follow to increase your strength.

HOW? Do it toward the start of your chest workout for heavy sets in lower rep ranges. Consider varying your grip width for more complete chest development.



Low-Incline Barbell Bench Press

Many benches are fixed at a very steep angle, which requires a larger contribution from the front delts than the chest to move the weight. If possible, go for a less-steep incline to hit the upper pecs without as much stress on the delts. You can also easily do low-incline benches with an adjustable bench on the Smith machine.

Seated Machine Chest Press

Free-weight pressing moves on a flat bench are great, but the machine press has some unique benefits. For one, it's easier to slow down the repetition, both in the concentric and eccentric phases.

Stack-loaded machines are also great for quickly doing dropsets.

EMG research demonstrates that the machine bench press recruits much less of the three heads of the deltoid (anterior, middle, and posterior) than free-weight variations because of a decreased need for humeral stabilization.[3] This allows you to really target your pecs.

If you're really looking to build that shelf of an upper chest, EMG results have suggested that bringing your grip in a bit closer may hammer upper-chest fibers significantly more.



Machine Decline Press

Some machines, like Hammer Strength, allow you to move each arm independently, which is a great feature on chest day. Besides doing a machine decline press straight on, you can sit sideways on the apparatus and press across your body one arm at a time, which delivers a completely different feel than when you sit straight-on.

One of the primary muscle actions of the pec major is transverse adduction—think cable flies or pec-deck flies to understand this action. By sitting in a sideways position, you can maximize your press with a pec-dominant horizontal adduction, effectively getting more from the movement.

