

Training As Reported in "Men's Health"

If you have not read Nutrition and Diet, please read it first. Any trainer will tell you that nutrition is 70% of fitness and bodybuilding. That being said, it is time to train....

I will begin with cardiovascular exercise which is defined as exercise at a moderate to intense exercise for longer periods of time. There are many schools of thought on cardio but I have found that 3-4 cardio sessions for 35-45 minutes is the most effective. Depending on your fitness goals, cardio can accomplish many things. Several cardio sessions per week will slim body fat. Too many sessions will cause over-training and the body will respond by burning less fat and asking for carbohydrates (you will feel hungry). Too few and you will not see drastic improvement in your body. The most important factor in cardio training is timing. Do your cardio on an empty stomach. You will also get 3 times the fat burn by training in the morning before eating. If you cannot do your cardio in the morning, do it after your weight training workouts.

For most people, the optimal training routine would be weights or machines 4 times per week and cardio for 3 times per week. This is a routine for strengthening and shaping. If your schedule does not allow, this can be cut down to 2 weight training and 2 cardio sessions per week.

The optimal plan would look like this:

Day 1 - Chest/Shoulders

Day 2 - Arms/Abs

Day 3 - Off

Day 4 - Legs

Day 5 - Back/Abs

Day 6 - Off

Day 7 - Off

Cardio 3 times per week. Best is on non-training days and in the morning.

Time Saver Plan

Day 1 - Chest/Shoulder/arms/abs

Day 2 - Off

Day 3 - Cardio

Day 4 - Back/Legs/Abs

Day 5 - Off

Day 6 - Cardio

This is a rough schedule. It does not have to be followed exactly. Variety is one of the most important training factors. You should incorporate heavy and light days into your training. On heavy days, days which you feel energetic, do heavy sets of 6-10 reps. On light days do the same exercises with 18-20 reps per set. A variety of reps (and the speed of reps) works different muscle fibers. You want to cause damage (micro-tears) to the muscle. This makes the muscles grow stronger.

A note for women, don't be alarmed when I mention the words bigger or stronger. Weight training will not make you bigger or bulkier. Women and men are separated by a number of factors, the most important being testosterone. In short, no matter what training, or how heavy, you will never grow like a male. Weight training for women simply tones the muscles and makes them stronger. The picture of bulky muscular women in your head are the result of drug use by athletes. The average woman could never achieve that look naturally.

Back to variety, another thing is routine. There should be nothing routine about your routine. If you train the same exercises in the same order, you will most likely get the same results. Change the order of your routine every time you train. Every set should be a goal. For one set say that the goal is 10 reps of heavy slow weight. On the next set, say the goal is 20 reps at a good speed. Every set should be a goal. Every set should count. So often I see people training and they stop at 12 reps because that is what they were told to do. If you stop at 12 when you could have done 20. If you do not go to failure, you are not accomplishing anything. The goal of weight training is to continually strengthen the muscles; this only comes at the last 10% of the set. On the same note, if you are not feeling well or are unable to give 100% to your workout then do not train on that day. Take the day off and return when you are focused and ready to give 100%.

A never ending controversy is freeweights vs. machines. The freeweight people will tell you the movement is natural and it includes all associated muscles in a movement (stabilizer muscles). The machine people will tell you the fluid/controlled movement of the machine strengthens muscles with less injury. The fact is, both are correct. I recommend them both. Change your routine as much as possible. Do 3-4 sets on a machine and then do 3-4 sets with freeweights. I recommend between 12-14 sets for major muscles: Chest, Shoulders, Quads (legs), and Back. Smaller muscle groups (Triceps, Biceps, and Abs) should be 8-10 sets per session. Hamstrings, Lats, Calves and such should only be trained 6-8 sets.

The most important factor in training is knowing where you want to go with it. A training routine that works for someone else may not be the one for you. A trainer can give you direction and motivation, but it is up to the individual to achieve the goal. Take the basic knowledge and apply it to YOUR WORKOUT. It is your fitness goal – GO FOR IT!!!