

Chest



EVER WONDER HOW YOU APPEAR TO OTHERS?

Maybe you just blend in with the crowd. Or perhaps you're that distinguished person who stands apart and catches peoples' eyes. So much of our physical presence has to do with how we hold ourselves. And a prominent part of how we hold ourselves is our chest.

A well-defined chest establishes a strong "presence" and sends a message to the

world that we are confident and competent. The pectoral muscles, or "pecs," are an important symbol of physical strength: A powerful chest is something everyone recognizes. For the exercises we chose to help you develop a strong chest, we followed the tried-and-true philosophy that basics are best. Of course, some of them, like the classic bench press, can boost your ego as well as your muscle

mass. But remember, form is everything. Without proper form, you may lift more weight, but you won't get the results you desire. If you succumb to the temptation of overloading the weight, you'll shift the focus away from your chest and make yourself more susceptible to injury. Your goal is to build your best body—not set Olympic records.

1 barbell bench press

This exercise provides big returns for the energy you invest. Barbell bench presses help you build strength and muscle density, not just in your chest but in the front of your shoulders and your triceps as well.

Starting Position: Lie on a bench and firmly position your feet flat on the floor a little more than shoulder width apart. Keep your back flat on the bench. Using a grip broader than shoulder width, hold the barbell above your body, then lower slowly to the middle of your chest.

The Exercise: Without bouncing the weight off your chest, drive the barbell up over the middle of your chest until your arms are straight and your elbows are locked. Pause briefly, then lower slowly back to the starting position.



TIP AVOID ARCHING...

your back during this exercise. Try to keep your butt, hips, back and shoulders flat against the bench. Arching and/or lifting your butt off the bench decreases the amount of chest work and can cause lower back strain.

TIP TAKE MORE TIME...

on the eccentric (lowering) portion of the exercise than on the concentric (lifting) portion. By lowering the weight slowly, you involve more muscle fibers in your chest.



START/FINISH



MID-POINT

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2 barbell incline press

This exercise targets your upper chest area. Accentuating the eccentric phase (the descent of the weight to your chest) will enhance your strength and coordination.

Starting Position: The incline bench with a barbell rack should be set at a 45-degree angle. Sit on the bench with your feet flat on the floor a little more than shoulder-width apart. Position your back firmly against the bench. Using a grip slightly wider than shoulder width, hold the bar over your upper chest with your arms straight.

The Exercise: Slowly lower the bar until you make contact with the upper chest area. Pause briefly, then drive the weight straight up over your chest until your elbows are locked.



TIP DON'T ARCH...

your back as you perform the exercise. Keep your back firmly against the bench.



“It’s easier to wake up early and work out than it is to look in the mirror each day and not like what you see.”

3 dumbbell bench press

As an alternative to the barbell incline press, the dumbbell bench press builds mass equally well and “stimulates” the chest muscles even more. To balance the two separate weights, you must use more stabilizer muscles. This helps keep the bones and joints in a secure position while the main muscle groups extend and flex the body part being trained.



Starting Position: Sit on the edge of a flat bench with dumbbells on your knees. In one smooth motion, roll onto your back while bringing the dumbbells up to a position slightly outside and above your shoulders. Your palms should be facing forward. Bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle so that your upper arms are parallel to the ground.

The Exercise: Press the weights up over your chest in a triangular motion until they meet above the centerline of your body. As you lift, concentrate on keeping the weights balanced and under control. Then, follow the same triangular path downward as you lower the weights until your arms are slightly below parallel to the floor.



TIP RELAX YOUR NECK...

If you feel yourself tensing your neck or raising your shoulders, it's a sign that you're using too much weight and need to lighten up to get correct form. Also, keep your back, butt and hips on the bench.

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4 dumbbell incline press

Both the dumbbell incline press and dumbbell bench press can be done on a flat or incline bench. Whereas the flat presses tend to work the lower and mid-chest area, the incline press causes you to shift the focus of the exercise to the upper chest area. Setting the incline bench at a steeper angle will place even more emphasis on the upper pecs.



TIP WHEN LIFTING... heavy weights, try "kicking" them up to shoulder level using your knees to avoid back strain.



Starting Position: Sit on the edge of an incline bench set at about a 45-degree angle. Pick up a dumbbell in each hand and place them on your thighs. Then, one at a time, raise them up to shoulder level while you press your back and shoulders firmly against the bench.

The Exercise: Press the weights up to a point over your upper chest, palms facing forward (pointing toward your feet). Lower the weights slowly. Pause briefly in the bottom position, then drive the weights back up. Remember to inhale as you lower the weights and exhale as you lift the weights.



TIP IF YOUR BENCH... has adjustable settings, try different inclines to target various parts of the chest. Avoid setting the incline too high, though, as you will begin to target the shoulder muscles rather than the chest.

“Quality and quality of life go hand in hand. It’s your decision.”

5 dumbbell flies

If you want pecs that look full and round, this exercise is for you. Its stretching and flexing motion defines the muscles around the perimeter of your chest. Dumbbell flies can be done on a flat or an incline bench. Experiment with changing the angle of the bench: this will enhance muscle development by slightly shifting the emphasis of the exercise.



Starting Position: Sit down on the edge of a bench with a dumbbell in each hand. Then lie back, keeping the dumbbells close to your chest. Lift the dumbbells over your chest by extending your arms. Maintain a slight bend in your elbows. Keep your hips and shoulders flat on the bench, and your feet flat on the floor.

The Exercise: For the first rep, lower the dumbbells to the sides of your body in an arc-like motion. At the lowest point, your bent elbows should be on a horizontal plane even with the bench. Then slowly bring the weights back up over your chest in an arc. The bend in your elbows should remain constant throughout the exercise.

TIP REMEMBER...

this is a flye, not a press. Keep your elbows in a bent position throughout the exercise. Visualize that you are trying to wrap your arms around a giant tree.

TIP DON'T TRY TO USE...

too much weight on this exercise or lower the weights too far below the bench as you may stress your shoulders. Use weights that allow you to maintain proper form.



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6 cable crossovers

This exercise is similar to the “hugging” motion of the dumbbell flies.



Starting Position: Take hold of the stirrup handles attached to the high pulley and stand about one foot in front of the weight stacks with a handle in each hand. Lean slightly forward, with one foot in front of the other for balance, and your front knee slightly bent.

TIP USING VARIATIONS...

in the amount of bend in your body and angle at which you pull the handles down will hit different areas of the chest.

The Exercise: Bring your hands around and in front of your body in a hugging motion, elbows slightly bent. You should be pulling down at a slight angle. Focus on using just your chest muscles to perform this exercise. When your hands meet directly in front of your midsection, hold for a moment to fully contract the muscles. Then slowly return to the starting position.



TIP DON'T WALK OUT...

too far in front of the pulley system; the angle will not be optimal.