

Workout Variations

Eventually, all workouts get a little boring and you may stop seeing gains or stop achieving your goals. It might be time to mix up your workout a little or as “Tony Horton (P90X)” says promote “muscle confusion”. The following are a few general tips to make sure your workouts are the most effective they can be and some variations on the everyday sets.

Tips:

- ✓ Make sure that you are working every part of your body for a well-developed look and to prevent muscle imbalances. Even if your goal is to make gains in your chest, you can't neglect your back.
- ✓ Variety is the spice of life and people lifting weights need to mix things up every once in a while. Changing weight, the angle of exercise or adding new exercises can help get you grow bigger and stronger.
- ✓ Always use proper form to prevent injury and isolate specific muscle groups. We've all seen the weight trainer who tries to curl too much weight and ends up using mostly their back. If your using a lot of weight make sure you have a spotter and maintain proper form...that's what a spotter is for.
- ✓ Don't forget the general warm-up. Many experienced lifters head straight for the weights when they should first get the blood moving and loosen up those joints. Without this warm-up, tight muscles can be injured.
- ✓ Specific warm-ups can help you get the most out of an intense workout. Specific warm-ups are usually done as the first set in a specific exercise. For example, warm-up the chest before bench press by simply pressing the bar without any weights.
- ✓ Don't forget to stretch after workouts! Loose muscles are healthy and will reduce the risk of injury. Try spending a day doing a long stretching routine, you'll feel great after.

New Training Variations

★ Pyramids

This is one of the most common variations people consider using and is often just a normal way to lift. When doing multiple sets, start with a light weight for the 1st set and increase the weight by 5-10 lbs. for each later set. E.G. 1st set 30 lbs., 2nd set 35 lbs., 3rd set 40 lbs.

★ Drop Sets (also breakdowns or drop downs)

In this variation, one set actually consists of many smaller “sets” in which a person continually drops the weight 5-10 lbs. After warming up a heavy weight is used in which you can only perform 6-8 repetitions. After lifting the weight until failure (i.e., you cannot perform another repetition by yourself) “drop” 5-10 lbs. and continue to perform the same exercise to finish the set. You can perform multiple drop downs within one set.

★ Super Sets

This variation is when two sets are performed without rest in between. You can do this with the same muscle group or muscle pairs (opposites). For example, performing biceps curls with the curl bar and then doing isolation curls with dumbbells. With opposite groups, biceps curls can be performed immediately followed by triceps pushdowns.

★ Giant Sets

This variation is similar to a super set, but instead of two exercises three or more exercises are completed without rest in between.

★ **Slow Sets**

In this variation, exercises are performed very slowly in both the lifting phase and the lowering phase. Instead of taking 1-2 seconds for each, spend about 10 seconds lifting and 10 seconds lowering. The purpose is to control the weight and isolate the muscle group.

★ **Negatives**

Without a spotter, this variation will not work! The spotter helps you lift the weight to the top that is difficult to lift on your own. Then the weight gets lowered at an extremely slow pace (your muscle can hold more weight in a “negative” direction than in a positive direction. This can be repeated multiple times and can cause major damage to the muscle. When performing negative sets more rest (off days) may be needed to allow the muscle to fully recover and repair itself.

WORKOUT VARIATIONS

1. What can you do to prevent muscle imbalances?
2. What are some general ways to add variety to your workout?
3. What can a general warm-up include?
4. What does a specific warm-up do for your muscles?

From the “**new training variations**” section:

5. Describe the concept of “pyramids”.
6. When performing “drop downs”, what do you need to do to your muscle before dropping the weight?
7. What is the difference between “super sets” and “giant sets”? **Give an example** of each that is **not** from the reading.
8. How long should the lifting and lowering phases be during slow sets?
9. Why is it important to have a spotter for negatives?