[IMAGE]

A Total-Body Workout in 5 Easy Steps

Part 1: Firm the Chest

By Chelsea Cooper

Need help devising an exercise routine without the expense of a personal trainer? Get results with fitness expert Chelsea Cooper's five-part exercise series covering each of the major muscle zones. In this first installment, learn exercises and techniques to strengthen and tone your chest.

Chelsea Cooper at Club No Mercy Intensity Performance Training Studio. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark All photographs taken at Club No Mercy Intensity Performance Training Studio (www.clubnomercy.com) in Huntington Beach, Calif. The chest is an integral part of any resistance program. As you're working the chest muscles, which are called *pectoralis major* and *pectoralis minor*, you are also working your shoulder muscles (posterior and anterior deltoids) and your triceps. Most chest exercises work three major upper-body muscles in one exercise.

Contrary to popular belief, chest exercises are not just for men; it is vital for women to have good upper-body strength to perform their daily activities effectively. Exercises should be done at least two days a week to see any results, and three days a week for optimal performance and results. Here are five chest exercises to get you started:

Chelsea Cooper performing flat bench dumbbell chest press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Elbows flexed at a 90-degree angle. **FLAT BENCH DUMBBELL CHEST PRESS**

Getting Started

1 Lie on a flat bench with your knees bent.

2 Your feet should be flat on the bench or floor, shoulder-width apart, with your toes pointing straight ahead.

3 Hold one dumbbell in each hand at chest level, slightly outside of the body line, with your elbows flexed at a 90-degree angle.

Chelsea Cooper performing flat bench dumbbell chest press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark

Keep back flat against the bench. **Movement**

4 Keep your back flat against the bench and press both dumbbells straight up and then together by extending your elbows and contracting the chest. Do not arch your back.

5 Pause at the top.

6 Slowly return the dumbbells toward the body by flexing your elbows and allowing your shoulders to retract and relax.

Progression: Alternating arm, single-arm.

WORKOUT BASICS

Repetitions And Sets: Same for both men and women; varies depending on individual goals (toning muscle vs. building muscle vs. building strength).

Intensity: This is the percentage of your one-rep maximum (the maximum amount of weight you can lift at one time). For example, if your goal is to build muscle, you would perform repetitions using 70 percent to 75 percent of your one-rep maximum (see below). That means that if you can bench press 100 pounds one time, you would perform each repetition using a maximum of 75 pounds of weight.

Toning Muscle (Strength/Endurance)

Sets: 2-3 /// Reps: 15-25 /// Intensity: 50% - 70%

Building Muscle (Hypertrophy)

Sets: 3 /// Reps: 9-12 /// Intensity: 70% - 75%

Strength Adaptation

Sets: 3-4 /// Reps: 6-8 /// Intensity: 75% - 85%

PUSHUP

Chelsea Cooper performing pushup. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Keep abs drawn in and glutes tight. **Getting Started**

1 Begin in a pushup position with your feet and hands on the floor, slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.

Movement

2 Keep your abs drawn in and glutes tight.

3 Keeping your back flat, slowly lower your body to the ground by flexing your elbows and squeezing your shoulder blades. Do not let your shoulders rise up.

Chelsea Cooper performing pushup. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Keep shoulders from rising up. **4** Stop as soon as you can no longer keep your shoulder blades together.

5 Push back up to starting position by extending your elbows. Do not allow your head to jut forward.

6 Repeat.

Regression: On knees, hands on bench, feet on floor.
Progression: Hands on medicine ball, rotation.

STANDING CABLE CHEST PRESS

Chelsea Cooper performing standing cable chest press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Foot position may vary. Do not change position during the exercise. **Getting Started**

1 Stand with your back to the weight stack, your feet shoulder-width apart and pointing straight ahead, and your knees slightly bent.

2 Maintain a stable position with your knees over your second and third toes.

3 Hold one cable in each hand at chest height (palms facing the floor), with your elbows flexed and slightly below shoulder level.

Chelsea Cooper performing standing cable chest press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Keep head from leaning forward. **Movement**

4 Squeeze your glutes and draw in your abs.

5 Press cables forward and together by extending your elbows and contracting (squeezing) your chest. Do not let your head jut forward.

6 Slowly return your hands to the original position by flexing your elbows and squeezing your shoulder blades.

INCLINE DUMBBELL CHEST PRESS

Chelsea Cooper performing incline dumbbell chest press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Hold dumbbells at chest level. **Getting Started**

1 Lie with your back flat on an incline bench (different from flat bench), feet flat on the floor and toes pointing straight ahead.

2 Hold one dumbbell in each hand at chest level, slightly outside of your body line, with your elbows flexed.

Movement

Chelsea Cooper performing incline dumbbell chest press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Do not let the dumbbells touch. **3** Draw in your abs and keep your back flat against the bench. Do not arch your back.

4 Press both dumbbells straight up and then together by extending your elbows and contracting your chest. Do not let the dumbbells touch.

5 Pause at the top.

6 Slowly return the dumbbells toward your body by flexing your elbows and allowing your shoulders to relax.

STABILITY BALL BARBELL PRESS

Chelsea Cooper performing stability ball barbell press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Keep toes pointed straight. **Getting Started**

1 Lie on a stability ball with the ball placed between your shoulder blades and head, with your head resting comfortably on the ball.

2 Maintain a bridge position by squeezing your glutes and keeping your shoulders, hips and knees at the same level.

3 Your feet should be shoulder-width apart, with toes pointed straight.

4 Hold the barbell at chest level.

Chelsea Cooper performing stability ball barbell press. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Stop just before your elbow joints are straight. **Movement**

5 Push the weight up, while keeping your elbows parallel. Stop just before your elbow joints are straight.

6 Lower the weight slowly until your elbow joints are in line with your shoulders.

7 Reverse the motion.

Good luck, and enjoy your workout! Next month, we'll focus on strengthening and toning the arms.

Chelsea Cooper, MPA, CPT, is certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine as a personal trainer, performance enhancement specialist, and rehab and exercise specialist. To learn more, visit www.trainwithchelsea.com.

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