

[IMAGE]

Maximize Your Workout

By Dr. Perry Nickelston

Are you suffering from exercise advice overload? These days, there's so much information out there it's hard to know where to begin, much less how to maximize your current workouts. One expert says to do this, while another one says to do that. And just when you think you have it down and are making progress, your body adapts to the program you're on, leaving you searching for other options.

Well, search no more. You are about to discover powerful ways for taking your body to the next training level. In order to give you the keys to workout success, I consulted one of the top personal trainers in the industry, Rich Mejias, NASM, ACE, a performance specialist at Edge Fitness in Ramsey, N.J. I approached Rich and told him readers wanted the bare-bones, hard-core truth about maximizing their workouts. Together, we've cut through all the fluff and come up with six ways to safely take your body to the maximum. You may choose any and all of the options listed below depending on your experience level. Just remember, it's about quality of exercise, not quantity. Do it right before you decide to do it more! That means you should talk to your doctor after reading this article so you know how to do each of the example exercises mentioned.

1. Dynamic Warm-Ups

Girl workout with dumb bell - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark How can you expect to get maximum results if you don't establish a base foundation and get your body ready to perform? The purpose of a dynamic warm-up is to prepare your body for your workout. It's value comes from taking your body through all the planes of functional human movement such as bending, twisting and rotating. Example exercises include squat to stand movements (10 reps), lateral lunges (10 reps), and reverse lunges with twist and overhead reach (five reps on each side).

What makes a dynamic warm-up more effective than other pre-workout routines like walking on the treadmill or stretching? According to Rich, "It raises the temperature in the muscles you are about to work and starts the flow of adrenaline. It allows the muscles, joints, and nerves to get ready for specific movements. The key to a good dynamic warm-up is making sure that you don't burn a significant amount of

energy that you will need for your workout."

2. Interval Training

Want the best-kept secret when it comes to intense workouts? Studies have shown that about five minutes of high-intensity exercise, consisting of eight rounds of 20 seconds of exercise per round followed by 20 seconds off for recovery, is superior to 60 minutes of continuous cardio. Read that one more time so it sinks in! An important thing to remember when implementing this into your program is to never substitute duration for intensity. When working only a short period of time, you must ensure that your exercise form is perfect on each repetition.

Rich is adamant about doing this training properly. "Interval training is not for a beginner. It can be adjusted so that everyone can benefit from this type of training, but is highly recommended that you work directly with a personal trainer. Here are a couple of ways that you can adjust the program and still receive some of the same benefits: 1) shorter work times; 2) modified work-to- rest ratio (example: 10 sec on and 20 sec off)."

Example exercises include plyometric pushups with plyometric squats (20 seconds between sets), front-squat push-presses (15 seconds on, 15 seconds off), and kettlebell swings (20 seconds on, 20 seconds off).

**Plyometrics:* Exercises based on fast, powerful movements, often used to improve performance in a particular sport.

3. Timed Workouts

This is a similar concept to interval training, except the "bursts" of exercise are longer and you're doing only one particular exercise at a time, rather than performing a whole-body workout all at once. The purpose is essentially the same: to maximize the benefits of a resistance training program by creating maximum metabolic disturbance. That means you burn body fat by keeping your heart rate constantly elevated while training. Your metabolism never reaches an equilibrium set-point due to the alteration in timing.

Use a stopwatch to keep track of how long you take between sets of exercises and rest periods. Focusing on the stopwatch time keeps your intensity level from waning as the workout progresses. Rich suggests "lifting heavy weight with proper form and keeping the time under tension to 40-60 seconds on each exercise. Take

a minimum rest between exercises; no more than 20 seconds."

Example exercises (biceps workout) include dumbbell biceps curls (sets of 10 repetitions, each followed by 20 seconds of rest), straight bar curls (sets of 10 repetitions, each followed by 20 seconds of rest; and rope cable curls (sets of 10 repetitions, each followed by 20 seconds of rest.

4. Body-Weight Super-Set Training

Tuff girl - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Intensify your weight training by adding "super sets" of body-weight training to truly engage your muscles. Talk about intensity and variety! This is the ticket for you. Super-setting is a technique in which you take an exercise targeted for a specific muscle group and immediately perform a similar exercise with no rest. With this technique, you don't use weights or machines for the second exercise. This is a time-efficient, intensive way to maximize strength and lean muscle development. Best of all, you can use this principle for any workout.

Example exercises: 1) Chest Combination: flat bench dumbbell presses (15 repetitions), super-setted with wide grip push-ups (25 repetitions). Back combination: machine pulldowns (15 repetitions), super-setted with body-weight pull-ups (maximum number of repetitions you can perform).

5. Recovery and Regeneration

Working out breaks your muscles down and in order for them to heal properly you must give your body adequate rest. Without recovery time you risk overtraining. Too much exercise limits your progress and your body becomes catabolic, meaning it begins to degenerate. Eventual loss of lean muscle mass and bone density occurs. How can your body thrive, when you do not allow proper healing? No amount of exercise will positively affect your body if you are in a state of overtraining.

Rich believes this is the biggest mistake most people make when undertaking a training program: "You want to make sure that you give your muscles a minimum of 48 hours to recover before you work them out again. Serious weight training creates microtrauma; tiny tears and strains in your muscles and connective tissues. To ensure that you are not damaging your body, it is recommended to weight train no more than three times in a seven-day period." Incorporate regeneration programs such as active isolated rope stretching and myofascial foam rolling techniques on rest days for accelerated recovery.

6. Integrative Training

They say variety is the spice of life; well, it's also true for maximizing workouts. Your body has an amazing adaptation response to stress - it's called *homeostasis*. Knowing this fact can make a big difference in how you approach exercise. You need to shock your system into changing by integrating other fitness routines into your regimen; if you stick with the same old program, your body will adapt and stop making progress. Examples include: yoga, Pilates, spin cycling, boxing, kickboxing, kettlebells, plyometrics and sprint running.

When was the last time you ran a flight of stairs? Try visiting the track and running bleachers for 15 minutes. You want maximum? That's at the top of the list. Your muscles will not know what hit them. You just might find yourself enjoying the challenge!

Notwithstanding the above suggestions, the most important component of maximizing your workout is actually a simple one, and it's completely under your control: desire. You have to push yourself with intensity and passion to improve your body. Yes, it will be difficult and challenging at times, but that is how we excel. You have the power to continually change your body for the better; all you have to do is go out and make it happen. As with all new fitness and exercise programs, make sure you can physically tolerate the new routine. Always get a medical clearance and physical evaluation prior to any new intensive training program.

Man workout with dumb bell - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Do It Right

Not quite sure how to perform some of the example exercises mentioned in this article. Here are a few detailed descriptions to get you started. Remember to always talk to your doctor and/or trainer before starting any new exercise program, particularly if you're not familiar with how to perform a particular exercise. After all, getting hurt on day one isn't a great way to maximize your workout.

Squat to Stand: Bend at the waist, grabbing under your big toes. Keeping your arms straight and inside your knees, pull your hips down until they're between your ankles and lift your chest up. Then tuck your chin and try to straighten your legs, holding on to your toes as you straighten out your hips and toes.

Reverse Lunge Twist: Starting with your feet together, step back with your right leg into a lunge. Arch your back slightly while twisting your torso over your left leg and while reaching your right hand to the sky.

Push back and out of the position into the next lunge. Make sure you lean back and rotate, firing your glute (butt) muscle on your back leg.

Lateral Lunge: Keep your toes pointed straight ahead and feet flat. Squat by sitting back and down onto your right leg, keeping your leg straight and the weight on the right leg's midfoot to heel. Squat as low as possible, keeping your left leg straight and holding this position for 2 seconds. Return to starting position and repeat.

Foam Hamstring: Place a foam roll under one or both of your hamstrings and let your body glide up and down the roll.

Perry Nickelston, DC, is clinical director of the Pain Laser Center in Ramsey, N.J., where he focuses on performance enhancement, corrective exercise and metabolic fitness nutrition To learn more about Dr. Nickelston, visit www.painlasercenter.com/Our_Practice.html.

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