

PT365

GET FIT OR GO HOME

Stronger forearms, wrists & hands

Exercises for these often neglected muscles

By Bob Thomas

Most people don't go below the bicep when exercising their arms. But aside from the legs, the hands, wrists and forearms are your body's most utilized muscles and bone structures.

Opening doors, grabbing and lifting, and carrying objects are just a few of the numerous actions that we execute on a routine basis every day.

A strong grip may even save your life someday.

Golf? You may be able to swing the club head at 90-plus mph, but if you don't have the hand strength to hold it on line through contact, your ball could travel anywhere. That mis-hit is magnified if you are in the rough or sand and you can't hold the club on line.

To improve your lower arms, do 10 repetitions of the following exercises. Except for the hammer curls, 3- to 5-pound weights are all you need to start.

Hammer curls

This exercise gets its name from gripping the dumbbell like a hammer, with the palms of your hands facing inward toward each other instead of facing up, as in a normal bicep curl. (Most everyday functions are done with the palms facing in).

This engages the brachioradialis muscle that originates above the elbow and inserts on the thumb side where the wrist connects to the hand. Keep your elbows locked into your side and raise the weight along the same

line you use for a bicep curl. You will find that you can up the weight you use for bicep curls from 10 percent to 15 percent.

Hand grippers

This is hand strength improvement in its most basic form. You have an object in your hand that has resistance, and you squeeze it. Rubber ball, coil springs with handles, etc. Paul Roarke — I wrote a review on his book "Corps Strength" last year — hooked me up with GripPro Trainer, which makes doughnut-like grippers of different resistance levels. They are excellent, and I have been using them in training some high school wide receivers.

Wrist curls

This can be used to strengthen either the flexors (muscles on the underside of the forearm pulling the hand in a downward direction) or the extensors (muscles on the topside of the forearm pulling the hand in an upward direction).

To work the extensors, grip the weight overhand, rest your forearms on your legs, wrists over the knees. Curl the weight as high as possible without letting your forearms rise off the leg.

To work the flexors, grip the weight underhand and rest your forearms on your legs, wrists over knees. Curl the weight as high as possible without letting your forearms rise off your leg.



Hammer curls

PHOTOS BY CHRIS MADDALONI/STAFF

Hand and finger squeeze

So simple, you forget about it. Hold a sheet of newspaper in one hand. Start at one corner and gather the sheet into the palm of your hand using your fingers to grip, pull, and squeeze it into a tight ball. □

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[FITREP]

Bite-size weekly health tips.

Cardio beats weights for trimming waist

Aerobic exercise is better than resistance training if you want to lose deep belly fat, according to a Duke University Medical Center study that compared the effectiveness of aerobic exercise, resistance training, or a combination of the two. Aerobic exercise significantly reduced visceral and liver fat deep within the abdomen and improved risk factors for heart disease, while resistance training did not. Combining the exercises achieved results similar to aerobic exercise alone.

Reduce overuse injuries

Overuse injuries may occur when you ramp up your exercise routine too quickly or too vigorously. Among other recommendations, the American Academy of Family Physicians recommends you:

- Limit your running distance increase to no more than 10 percent each week.
- Limit your total weekly distance to no more than 45 miles.
- Stop running when you have pain — don't push through it.
- Rest and ice a painful area for two to three days; see a doctor after a week if it doesn't improve.

Seasonal superfoods

Four late-summer "superfoods" that you may never have tried, but that the American Council on Exercise says you should definitely check out:

Kumquats: A "nutrient-packed, low-calorie citrus delight" high in limonoids (potential cholesterol-lowerers and anti-carcinogens found in citrus fruits) as well as fiber — a whopping 9 grams from just a handful.



MIKE CLARKE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Red currants: Four times the Vitamin C of oranges and a decent source of fiber, iron — and even a bit of protein.

Okra: High in soluble and insoluble fiber, folate and Vitamin C — and good even if it's not fried.

Arugula: Packs in folate, vitamins A and K, zinc, potassium, calcium and iron.

Sleep linked to blood pressure

If you sleep poorly, your chances of developing high blood pressure may increase. In a study published in the Aug. 29 online edition of the journal Hypertension, men with the lowest level of the deeper stages of slumber, known as slow-wave sleep, had an 80 percent higher chance of developing high blood pressure than men with the highest level of this restorative sleep.



Overhand wrist curls



Underhand wrist curls



Hand grippers

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