

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Tuesday, July 8, 2003

Getting and staying fit for the summer

Proper use of machines helps to increase strength

By Michael Klepper
KRT CAMPUS

Use it or lose it! Without exercise, your body naturally will lose muscle with each passing decade.

Less muscle means a lower metabolism, which accelerates an increase in body fat. With summer and "beach bodies," it's time to get serious about exercising. The muscles respond positively to weight training, increasing your metabolic rate, raising HDL levels (the good cholesterol) and aiding in lowering blood pressure.

Many trainees do exercises that are easy and avoid the hard ones — like the men who walk into the gym and head for the chest machines or the women wanting to work only their legs.

So here's how to get your muscles working. The pectoral machine, for example, is often one of the most difficult for women. So on your next chest day, start with this exercise that works the chest muscles — the pectoralis major and the pectoralis minor and to a lesser extent the anterior deltoid.

It is important to use proper form when working the chest muscles, as they can be very brittle and tear easily. Reattachment may require surgery. Adjust the seat so that when you are seated and your elbows are resting against the pads of the machine, you are not reaching up or down. The machine arm pads should be at shoulder height.

Select 10 pounds for women and 15 pounds for men. This exercise focuses on the position of the elbow, not the hands. Sit down and place your arms against the pads. Begin the exercise by squeezing your elbows together and then slowly returning your arms back until they are even with your body. Then squeeze them together for your second repetition. Perform 15 reps.

Then get out of the machine and increase the weight five pounds for your second set of 12 repetitions. As the chest fatigues, the elbows will have a tendency to rise off the pads with the hands increas-

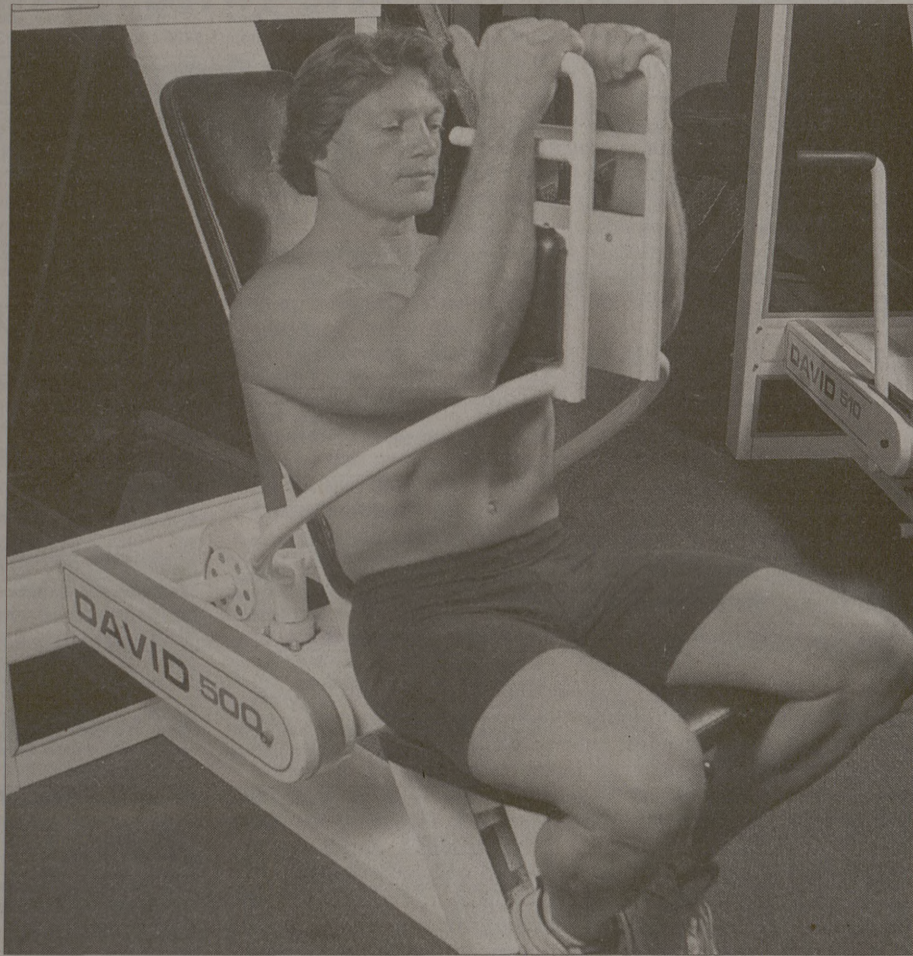


PHOTO BY CHRIS VIOLA - KRT CAMPUS

ingly pressing more. Don't allow this. To compensate, I have trainees put their arms straight out and turn their palms slightly up toward the ceiling and then in a long sweeping motion squeeze the elbows together. Again, watch for the hands to turn down and the elbows to raise up, this is your signal that it's time to stop and psych up for your next set.

After your second set of 12 reps,

increase again by five pounds and perform 10 repetitions. Your movement together is deliberate and should be completed in two seconds with the return under control and completed in four seconds. For your final set, increase the weight five pounds and perform eight repetitions.

For proper training, you need to lead your body rather than letting your body lead you.

Pre-aerobic stretching enhances flexibility

By Amy Bertrand
KRT CAMPUS

ST. LOUIS — Think about that tight feeling when you wake up in the morning. Think about the stiff muscles in your back when you are walking around the mall, and about that charley horse you get while exercising. Now, how would a good, safe stretch feel right about now?

Experts say flexibility — along with strength and cardiovascular training — is a key component of overall fitness.

"Stretching is important to maintain a full range of motion," says Diane Rabe, group exercise director for Club Fitness in St. Louis and co-owner of Midwest Fitness Consulting. "When you lose flexibility you lose mobility as you age. And you lose strength."

"If you think about it, flexibility is the first thing. If you aren't flexible, you aren't mobile, and you can't do cardio or strength training."

Although there is some controversy over which flexibility exercises are the best and how often one should stretch, most fitness professionals agree that stretching has numerous health benefits.

Stretching has been shown to prevent injury, increase your range of motion, promote relaxation, improve performance and

posture, reduce stress and keep your body feeling loose and agile. Here's our guide on how to do it right.

Use static stretching

Static stretching involves a slow, gradual and controlled elongation of the muscle through the full range of motion (as far as the muscle can move in all directions). It is held for 10 to 15 seconds (though some experts suggest up to a minute) in the furthest comfortable position and without pain.

"Each person is going to have a different comfort level, so I recommend that you should go until it is a little uncomfortable," says Nate Wilmes, director of sports medicine for Excel Sports and Physical Therapy in St. Louis. "Exercise and stretching should be a good thing; it should make you feel good and want to do it, so you don't want anyone to do something where there is pain."

How often?

Wilmes recommends that everyone, regardless of fitness level, do some basic stretches in the morning and before bed. And he recommends stretching before and after a workout. Ideally, he says, you should warm up to get the blood circulating throughout the body and into the muscles, with 10 to 15 minutes of moderate activity, then stretch, then work out, then stretch again.

NEWS
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