

MUSCLE

BULLETIN®

Edited by Laura Roberson

INSTANT STRENGTH

Now you have another reason to launch a fitness program: **Beginners can add strength quickly, say Brazilian researchers.**

When men with no training experience performed squats, they increased their 1-rep max more than three times as much as lifters who had at least 2 years of experience—and they pulled off the improvement in only four workouts. One possible reason for the impressive, fast gains: Communication between your mind and your muscles improves as you learn, allowing you to recruit more muscle fibers and lift heavier weights, the researchers say.

TARGET: ABS

Training your abs isn't as complicated as it seems. "The six-pack, or rectus abdominis, is actually one muscle, so all ab exercises cause activation," says Stuart McGill, Ph.D., author of *Ultimate Back Fitness and Performance*. But certain exercises can trigger other regions of your core, such as your obliques, for a complete ab workout. Use these tips from McGill to simplify your approach and see faster results.

THE OBLIQUE SOLUTION

For the most activation of your obliques, try rolling planks. Hold a side plank for 10 seconds, rotate to a plank for 10 seconds, and then hit the other side for 10 more seconds. That's 1 set. Do 6.

PROTECT YOUR SPINE

Your abs are structured to resist motion, not create it, so try to avoid exercises that involve bending or twisting your spine.

SIX-PACK SECRET

Stop trying to suck in your navel toward your spine, says McGill. Instead, brace your abs as if you were about to be punched in the stomach.

THE BEST ABS EXERCISE

Try "stir the pot," one of McGill's favorite moves. Assume a pushup position, but place your elbows and forearms on a Swiss ball. Move your elbows in a circle, making sure that your core doesn't rotate.

BUILD ABS FASTER

"The ab muscles are designed to work together," says McGill. Trying to target your upper and lower rectus abdominis separately isn't efficient.

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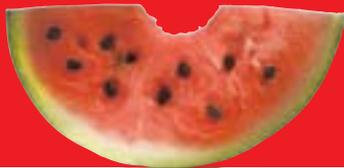
PERCENTAGE OF PHYSICALLY ACTIVE MEN WHO WOULD EXERCISE AT HOME IF THEY HAD THE EQUIPMENT

Source: Mintel

ON OUR RADAR

Rep booster?

Protein isn't the only thing that'll help your muscle fibers. Citrulline malate—an amino acid—may boost the amount of weight you can handle, say researchers in Spain. When men consumed 8 grams of the supplement before a workout, they performed more reps than men who skipped the dose. That's because citrulline malate, which is similar to a compound found in watermelon, might buffer fatigue. But more research is needed to determine if eating the fruit would have a similar impact.



THE FORGOTTEN WORKOUT

Want to boost your bench? University of Missouri scientists have found that a workout based on a classic 1950s routine might be the best way to build strength. To find out for yourself, start by choosing the heaviest weight you think you can lift six times. This is your base weight. Then follow this 4-set routine, resting 3 minutes between each set.

Set 1 10 reps with half of your base weight **Set 2** 6 reps with 75 percent of your base weight **Set 3** As many reps as you can with your base weight **Set 4** If you were able to complete 5 to 7 reps in set 3, use the same weight and perform as many repetitions as you can. If you completed more or fewer reps than that, use the table on the right to increase or decrease the weight. Then do as many reps as you can. For your next workout, use this amount as your new base weight, and repeat the entire process.

IF YOU COMPLETED ...	TAKE YOUR BASE WEIGHT AND ...
0-2 reps	decrease by 5-10%
3-4 reps	decrease by up to 5%
8-12 reps	increase by 5-10%

From top: SCOTT MODERMOTT, grooming: Mia Sarazen, Mike Kemp/Getty Images