**The Ultimate Shoulder Workout**

**This workout delivers the bolder shoulders you want in the time you have.**
by Myatt Murphy, Men's Health; Photograph by Piotr Sikora

**Greater Strength**

The alternating shoulder press in this workout helps you look great all over. Because you work each arm separately, both sides of your body are trained evenly—helping you avoid muscle imbalances.

**A Bulletproof Upper Body**

This workout emphasizes your rotator cuffs—the primary stabilizers of the shoulder joints. Since the shoulders are the most unstable joints in the body, shoring them up helps protect you from injury and allows you to lift more in every upper-body exercise.

**The Ultimate Pump**

This routine incorporates a sequence called the Javorek complex, named after former Romanian Olympic weight-lifting coach Istvan Javorek. It works your shoulders from five angles, forcing a surge of blood that'll make your upper body appear larger right after your workout.

**How Strong Are Your Shoulders?**

The classic military press builds the largest muscles of your shoulders, including your deltoids, rotator cuffs and trapezius, making it a great exercise to measure shoulder strength.

Sit on a bench with your feet flat on the floor and grab an empty bar with your hands slightly more than shoulder-width apart. (Use a spotter.) Keeping your back straight, press the bar overhead until your arms are straight, then lower it to the top of your chest. Do 10 repetitions, rest 60 seconds, then add 10 to 20 pounds and repeat for a set of eight repetitions. Rest again, add another 10 pounds, and do a third set, this time of five repetitions. Continue adding weight in increments of five to 10 pounds — increase your rests to two to three minutes—until you work up to the heaviest weight you can lift five times. That's your five-repetition maximum, or five-rep max.

**Track Your Progress**

Record your five-rep max. Then follow the plan below and retest yourself every two weeks. Go to MensHealth.com/poster to compare your improvement with that of other Men's Health readers, or to use our one-rep-max calculator if you prefer not to complete this test.

The best way to build muscle isn't always the most obvious. For instance, conventional wisdom says that if your shoulders are weak, you're not working them hard enough. But, in fact, just the opposite is true, especially when it comes to the most obvious exercise. "Men do entirely too many shoulder presses," says Jon Crosby, C.S.C.S., performance director for Velocity Sports Performance. "Excessive pressing exercises can destabilize your shoulders by overworking the front portions of the muscles, which eventually causes the shoulder joints to be pulled out of alignment." So instead of growing stronger, your shoulders—and all the muscles that attach to the shoulder joints, including those of your chest and arms—become weaker over time.

The solution is this four-week plan, courtesy of Crosby. It's designed to work the entire shoulder girdle—all the muscles that hold your upper-arm bone in its socket and allow the shoulder blade to move. This includes your deltoids, trapezius, rhomboids and scapular stabilizers. And although logic might suggest that such a well-rounded approach would require extra time in the gym, Crosby took into account that most chest
and back exercises involve your shoulders—so you need to use this workout only once a week. Perform Workout A in the first two weeks and Workout B in weeks three and four. Do the exercises in the order shown, finishing all sets of an exercise before moving on to the next one.

**Workout A: Weeks 1 & 2**

**Alternating Shoulder Press**

Stand holding a dumbbell in each hand just above your shoulders, with a neutral grip (palms facing each other). Press the weight in your right hand straight above you until your arm is fully extended, then slowly lower the weight to the starting position. Now press the dumbbell in your left hand straight up and lower it. Continue to alternate arms throughout the set.

The plan: In week 1, do two sets of 10 repetitions with each arm; in week 2, do three sets of eight reps with each arm. Rest for 60 to 90 seconds between sets.

**Dumbbell Upright Row**

Stand holding a pair of dumbbells at arm's length in front of your thighs, your palms facing your body. Keeping your forearms pointed down and the weights close to your body, lift your upper arms. Pause when the dumbbells are just below your chin, then slowly lower them.

The plan: Perform two sets of 10 repetitions in week 1, and three sets of eight in week 2. Rest for 60 to 90 seconds between sets.

**Incline Row to External Rotation**
Lie facedown on a bench that's set at a 45-degree incline, and hold a light dumbbell in each hand with an overhand grip. Your arms should hang straight down, with your palms facing your feet. Keeping your head down, pull the weights up until your upper arms are parallel to the floor. Your elbows should point out to the sides and should be bent at 90-degree angles. Keeping your upper arms stationary, rotate the weights forward until your palms face the floor. Pause, then reverse the movement to return to the starting position.

The plan: Perform two sets of 12 repetitions, resting for 45 to 60 seconds between sets.

**Standing Scaption**

Stand holding a light pair of dumbbells in front of your thighs with a neutral grip (your palms facing each other). Raise your arms forward and out at 45-degree angles until they're at eye level. The weights should point to 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock at the top of the move. Slowly lower your arms.

The plan: Perform two sets of 12 repetitions, resting for 45 to 60 seconds between sets.

**Workout B: Weeks 3 & 4**

**Swiss-Ball Alternating Shoulder Press**
Sit on a Swiss ball with your feet flat on the floor. Hold a pair of dumbbells just above your shoulders with a neutral grip, your palms facing each other. Press the weights overhead until your arms are straight. Keeping your right arm extended, slowly lower the weight in your left hand to its starting position, then press it back up. Next, keeping your left arm extended, lower the weight in your right hand and press it back up. Continue alternating arms.

The plan: Perform three sets of six repetitions with each arm, resting for 60 to 90 seconds between sets.

**Dumbbell Shrug**

Stand holding a heavy dumbbell in each hand at arm's length, with your palms facing the sides of your thighs. Keeping your arms straight, shrug your shoulders up as if you were trying to touch them to your ears. Pause, then slowly lower your shoulders until your arms hang down as far as possible.

The plan: Do three sets of eight repetitions in week 3, and four sets of six reps in week 4. Rest for 60 to 90 seconds between sets.

**Lying Swiss-Ball Row to External Rotation**
Holding a light dumbbell in each hand, lie facedown on a Swiss ball with your chest off the ball so your body is inclined. Your arms should hang down in front of the ball, palms facing your feet. Keeping your neck straight, slowly pull the weights up until your upper arms are parallel to the floor, then rotate your forearms forward until your palms face the floor. Pause, then reverse the motion to lower the weights to the starting position.

The plan: Perform two sets of 10 repetitions, resting for 45 to 60 seconds between sets.

**Javorek Complex**

Stand holding a pair of dumbbells, arms at your sides, palms facing each other. Raise your arms in front of you until they're parallel to the floor. Lower the weights and repeat for a total of six repetitions. Now raise your arms out from your sides until they're parallel to the floor, and lower them. Again, complete six reps. Next, bend forward at the waist until your torso is almost parallel to the floor. Raise your arms out to your sides, lower them and repeat for a total of six reps. Stand up and place your hands in front of your thighs, palms toward you. Pull both weights up until they're just below your chin. Lower and repeat for six reps. Finally, turn your palms so they face each other, curl the weights up to your shoulders and press them overhead. Reverse the move and repeat for six reps.
The plan: Perform two sets, resting for 90 seconds between sets.
Get a Bigger Back

Produce solid lat muscles that can handle heavier loads
by Micheal A. Clark, D.P.T., Men's Health; Photographs by Beth Bischoff
Here's how to improve your lat pulldown and build a bigger back.

Work the stabilizing muscles in your shoulders and upper arms to produce solid lat muscles that can handle heavier loads.

Perform one to three sets of 10 to 12 repetitions of each exercise, keeping your leg and butt muscles tight and resting 45 to 60 seconds between sets. Place the ball a few feet in front of a wall so you can rest your feet against it. You need only 2-pound to 5-pound dumbbells. Beginners, do only the first move before doing lat pulldowns; experienced lifters, do the first two; experts, do all three.

1. Swiss-Ball Cobra

Lie facedown on a Swiss ball and hold a pair of dumbbells with your arms hanging down to the floor, palms facing forward. Raise your arms back until they're in line with your body, and pull your shoulder blades down and together. Hold for two to three seconds, then lower the weights.

2. Swiss-Ball Prone Military Press
Lie facedown on a Swiss ball and hold a pair of dumbbells at your shoulders, palms facing the floor. Press your arms straight forward so they're in line with your head. Pause, then return to the starting position.

3. Swiss-Ball Row Combination
Lie facedown on a Swiss ball and hold a pair of dumbbells (thumbs up) with your arms hanging down and forward at 45-degree angles to the floor. Pull the weights to your chest, then lift them out to your sides. Finally, pull the weights back to the sides of your butt. Return the weights to the starting position. That's one rep.
Build a Bigger, Stronger Chest

The perfect upper body in 18 minutes

Edited by Myatt Murphy, Men's Health; Photographs by Piotr Sikora

How do you measure up?

The best barometer of chest strength is your maximum bench press—the most weight you can lift for a single repetition. To determine your max, you'll need a spotter.

Grab an empty bar and perform 10 repetitions of the barbell bench press. Rest for 30 to 90 seconds, then add 20 to 40 pounds and repeat. Continue this process until the weight feels difficult. Then do only one repetition per set until you work up to the heaviest weight you can lift once—your one-repetition maximum, or one-rep max.

Track your progress

Record your one-rep max. Then follow the plan below, and retest yourself every four weeks. Go to MensHealth.com/poster to compare your improvement with that of other Men's Health readers or to use our one-rep max calculator, if you prefer not to complete this test.

Your goal: The perfect chest

Your time: 18 minutes

This routine attacks the primary cause of puniness. "The mistake most men make when looking for more chest size and strength is always sticking to the traditional eight-to-12-repetition principle," says Jason Ferruggia, owner of Renegade Strength and Conditioning, in Warren, New Jersey. Ferruggia's first rule: Diversify your repetition schemes and emphasize heavier-weight, lower-repetition sets. This allows you to target your body's fast-twitch muscle fibers, the ones with the greatest potential for growth.

At times, this workout calls for you to lift only your body weight while in a suspended position. Think gymnasts, who build rock-hard bodies without ever picking up a weight. "Moving your body through space is more taxing to your central nervous system than regular weight training," says Ferruggia. This means you'll improve your brain-to-muscle connection, which will train your body to recruit more muscle in every exercise.

Do Phase 1 for four weeks, working your chest twice a week with two separate routines (Day 1 and Day 2). (Do the exercises shown here as the chest portion of your upper- or total-body routine.) Rest at least two days between workouts. Complete Phase 2 workouts in the next four weeks.

Phase 1: Weeks 1-4

Day 1

Dumbbell Single-Arm Bench Press

Lie on your back on a bench with a heavy dumbbell in one hand along the side of your chest, palm facing in. Hold your opposite arm straight out to the side for balance.
Push the weight up so your arm is straight above your chest. Pause, then slowly lower the weight to the starting position.

The plan: Do five to seven repetitions with each hand. Complete four sets, resting two minutes after each set.

**Dumbbell Incline Bench Press**

Lie faceup on an incline bench and hold a pair of heavy dumbbells along the outsides of your chest with a neutral grip (palms facing in). Slowly press the weights straight above your chest. Pause, then lower them to the starting position.

The plan: Perform six to eight repetitions. Do three sets and rest two minutes after each set.

**Day 2**

**Suspended Pushup**

If your gym has Blast Straps ([elitefts.com](http://elitefts.com), $55) or chains, try this pushup variation. Otherwise, do the weighted pushup below. Loop the straps or chains around the bar so the handles hang a few inches off the floor.

Now assume the standard pushup position with your hands grasping the handles, so only your feet touch the floor. Bend at the elbows to lower your body until your upper arms are parallel to the floor, then push yourself up.

The plan: Do as many pushups as you can, then rest for 90 seconds. Do a total of three sets.

**Dumbbell Incline Fly**

Lie on an incline bench and hold a pair of dumbbells over your chest with your arms straight, palms facing forward. Keeping your palms forward, slowly sweep your arms down and out to your sides in an arc until the weights are level with your chest.

Pause, then reverse the motion until the weights are once again above you.

The plan: Perform this exercise as a superset with the next move. That is, do eight to 12 repetitions of the dumbbell incline fly, then immediately move to the parallel-bar dip.

**Parallel-Bar Dip**

Grab parallel dip bars and lift yourself so your arms are straight. Keeping your elbows tucked close to your body, slowly lower yourself by bending your elbows until your upper arms are parallel to the floor.

Pause, then push yourself up to the starting position.

The plan: Do as many reps as you can, then rest for three minutes and repeat the superset one time, performing a total of two sets of each exercise.

**Side-Lying Single-Arm External Rotation**
Lie on your left side with your left arm bent and your head resting on your left hand. Holding a light dumbbell in your right hand, bend your right arm 90 degrees and tuck your upper arm against your right side. Let the weight hang in front of your midsection. Keeping your upper arm stationary, slowly rotate your forearm until it points toward the ceiling. Then rotate your forearm back to the starting position.

The plan: Perform 12 to 15 repetitions, then rest for one minute. Do two sets.

**Phase 2: Weeks 5-8**

**Day 1**

**Barbell Bench Press**

Lie on a bench with your feet flat on the floor. Grab the bar with your hands slightly more than shoulder-width apart, and hold the weight over your chest. Pull your shoulder blades back and together, then lower the bar to your chest. (Tuck your elbows in at 45 degrees; don't let them flare out to the sides.) Pause, then push the weight back up.

The plan: Do five sets of four repetitions using 80 percent of your one-rep max (1RM). In week 6, do six sets of three reps with 85 percent of your 1RM. In week 7, do five sets of two reps with 90 percent of your 1RM. In week 8, repeat the test described on the front of the poster, then do four sets of one repetition with approximately 90 percent of your new 1RM.

**Weighted Pushup**

Assume the standard pushup position, with your hands beneath your shoulders. Ask your workout partner to place a weight plate on your back, between your shoulder blades. Keeping your body straight, lower yourself by bending your elbows until your chest touches the floor. Pause, then push yourself back up.

The plan: Perform this exercise as a superset with the next move: Do eight to 12 repetitions, then immediately move on to the cable lying fly.

**Cable Lying Fly**

Place an exercise bench between the stacks of a cable crossover station and attach stirrup handles to the low-pulley cables. Grab a handle with each hand and lie faceup on the bench with your feet flat on the floor. Hold your arms straight above your chest, palms facing each other. Keeping your elbows slightly bent, lower your hands out to your sides in an arc, then reverse the motion to return to the starting position.

The plan: Do eight to 10 repetitions, rest 150 seconds, then repeat the superset (pushup and cable lying fly) two times for a total of three sets.

**Seated Single-Arm External Rotation**

Sit on the floor with your left knee bent and your right leg flat on the floor. Hold a light dumbbell in your left hand and rest your left elbow on your left knee. Bend your left arm 90 degrees and allow the weight to hang down over your right leg. Keeping your elbow in place, slowly rotate your left arm upward. Pause when your forearm points to the ceiling, then reverse the motion until the weight is again hanging over your right leg.

The plan: Do 10 to 12 repetitions with each hand, then rest 60 seconds. Repeat one time, for a total of two sets.
All-in-One Abs Moves

Try these brand-new moves from the Abs Diet Get Fit, Stay Fit Plan
by David Zinczenko & Ted Spiker, Men's Health
Looking to shave even more time off your workout while shaving fat from your waistline?

These five moves work several areas of your midsection simultaneously. Use any one of the following substitutions to cover two or three areas with one exercise and you can reduce your workout plan to just a few exercises instead of five.

**Kneeling Three-Way Cable Crunch**

Targets both the upper abs and obliques

Attach a rope handle to the high pulley. Kneel facing the pulley and grab the ends of the rope, with your palms facing each other. Hold the ropes alongside your face, with your elbows bent. Bend forward at the waist, rounding your back and aiming your chest at your pelvis. Stop when you feel a contraction in your abdominal muscles. Return to the starting position, then repeat the movement, this time aiming your chest toward your left knee. Stop when you feel a contraction in your left obliques. Return, then repeat the movement to your right. That's one repetition.

8 repetitions

**Russian Twist**

Targets both the upper abs and obliques
Sit on the floor, with your knees bent and your feet flat. Hold your arms straight out in front of your chest, with your palms facing down. Lean back so that your torso is at a 45-degree angle to the floor. Twist to the left as far as you can, pause, then reverse your movement and twist all the way back to the right as far as you can. As you get stronger, hold a light weight in your hands as you do the movement. (Note: You may need to tuck your feet under a set of weights to help maintain balance throughout the exercise.)

10 repetitions each side

**V-Spread Toe Touch**

Targets both the upper abs and obliques

Lie flat on your back, with your legs straight up in a V position, without locking your knees. Raise your arms toward the ceiling. Curl your shoulder blades up and reach toward your right foot with both hands.
Hold for a second, concentrating on your abs, then lower to the starting position. Repeat, this time reaching for your left foot. Don't pause at the starting position.

**Corkscrew**

Targets both the lower abs and obliques

Lie on your back, with your legs raised directly over your hips; your knees should be slightly bent. Place your hands with the palms down at your sides. Use your lower abs to raise your hips off the floor and toward your rib cage, elevating your hips straight up toward the ceiling. Simultaneously twist your hips to the right in a corkscrew motion. Hold, then return to the starting position. Repeat, twisting to the left.

10 repetitions

**Double Crunch**
Targets both the upper and lower abs

Lie on your back, with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Position a medicine ball between your knees and rest your hands lightly on your chest.

Exhale as you lift your shoulders off the floor and bring your knees to your chest.

Grab the ball with your hands and bring it to your chest as you inhale and return your shoulders and legs to the starting position. Transfer the ball back to your legs on the next repetition, and keep alternating ball positions for the entire set.

12 repetitions
Instantly Upgrade Your Squats

These moves will help you lift more when you return to the traditional squat
by Carter Hays, C.S.C.S., Men’s Health; Photographs by Beth Bischoff

The classic barbell back squat develops all the muscles of your lower body, making it a must-have move in any workout plan. It develops strength and power in the quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes, all in one basic movement.

Here, you'll find two upgrades that strengthen the same muscles while also engaging your core. An added bonus: You'll build an athletic body by improving the flexibility and stability of your lats, lower back, hips and abs. As a result, you'll lift more weight when you return to the traditional back squat. (For more on that move, visit click here.) Remember: Focus on staying upright and maintaining a natural arc in your back.

Overhead Squat

This move forces you to control your center of gravity at a much higher point than in a back squat, so you'll strengthen your core. You'll also be able to press more weight overhead (for rock-hard shoulders), since the overhead squat conditions your back to stay straight.

1. Stand holding a bar overhead with an overhand grip, hands wider than shoulder width.

2. Pull your shoulder blades together to keep the bar in line with or behind your ears throughout the move. As you lower your body into a squat, imagine pulling the bar apart and pushing up on it. Pause when your thighs are parallel to the floor, then push yourself back to a standing position. Do two sets of 12 repetitions. Make it harder: Trade the bar for a pair of dumbbells.

Triceps Plate Squat
This full-body exercise combines a squat, press and triceps extension for a great cardiovascular and muscle-building workout. Perform 12 repetitions with the triceps extension in step 3, followed by 12 without it.

1. Focus on keeping your movements slow and smooth. Grab a weight plate and hold it overhead with your arms straight and your palms facing each other.

2. Keeping your eyes forward and chest up, squat while bringing your arms down in front of you until the weight is beneath your butt and your thighs are parallel to the floor.

3. Reverse the move to position 1. Lower the plate toward your back and raise it overhead again. That's one rep. Make it harder: As you stand back up in each rep, rise onto your toes.
Stand Strong

Work out your feet to gain greater speed, agility, and balance

Edited by David Schipper, Men’s Health; Photographs by Beth Bischoff

When was the last time you worked your feet? Top trainers know that two secrets to big athletic gains are at the ends of your legs. By focusing part of your workout on your feet, you'll gain greater speed, agility, power, and balance. “And, certainly, strong and flexible feet and ankles put you at less risk of sprains, strains, and other injuries,” says Richard Cotton, Ph.D., chief exercise physiologist at myexerciseplan.com.

BETTER BALANCE

Single-leg Balance

Fold a towel in half and roll it up. Step on the towel with your right foot, raise your left foot, and balance for 30 seconds. Do 10 on each foot.

Tip: Once this becomes easy, do the exercise on the flat side of a Bosu balance trainer (bosu.com), says Jonathan Ross, NSCA, C.P.T., owner of Aion Fitness, in Bowie, Maryland.

Best for . . . soccer, trail running

SUPERIOR SPEED

Toe Spreader
Scatter marbles, pebbles, pencils, or other small objects across the floor. While seated, start picking them up with your big toe and its neighbor.

Tip: Try more challenging pickups with your smaller toes. The curling action will strengthen your toe flexors, says Cotton, translating into quicker sprint acceleration and sharper cuts.

Best for . . . basketball, football

MORE POWER

**Single-Leg Hop**

Stand with your feet together. Lower yourself into a quarter squat. Raise your right foot 2 inches off the ground, then take a small hop, keeping the quarter-squat position. Land back on your left foot. Do three sets of five jumps on each foot.

Tip: “Push your heel against the ground to generate the hop,” says Jon Crosby, C.S.C.S., director of Atlanta-based Velocity Sports Performance.

Best for . . . basketball, football, tennis

IMPROVED AGILITY

**Stork Jump**
Stand with your feet hip-width apart, hop forward, and land on your right foot with your knee slightly bent. Stick the landing, holding yourself in a stork position (left foot off the ground, knee bent 90 degrees) for 10 seconds. Do 10 hops and holds on each foot.

Tip: "If you're training for a multidirectional sport, crisscross your hops for increased dynamic control of your feet," says Ross.

Best for . . . hockey, inline skating, climbing