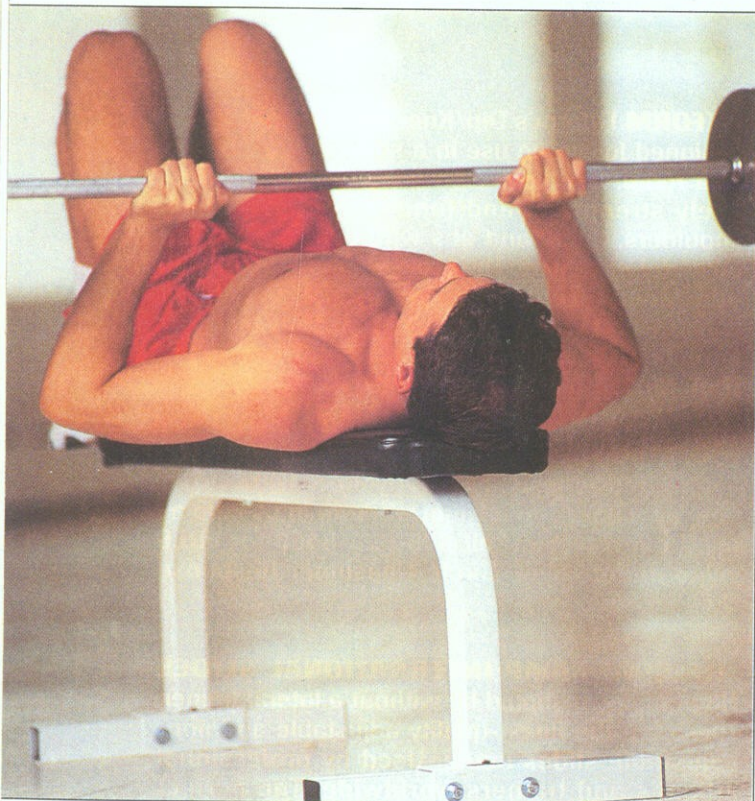


With this issue we introduce a regular department, "Inside Workout," designed to help you fine-tune your technique, expand your exercise repertoire, and stay highly motivated.

TECHNIQUE

Bench Press: Do It Right

Everyone loves the bench press. It develops the "pecs," the pectoralis major muscles, which appeal to the vain side in men and literally can provide a slight lift to the bust for women. But the bench press does more than that. This classic lift comprises three separate joint movements that work an array of upper-body muscles. Thus, correct form and mechanics are key to strength development and important in avoiding injury. Follow these guidelines:



The classic bench press: When you use proper technique, a wide range of muscles does a lot of work.

- Your head, back, and buttocks should be in contact with the bench, and your feet should be either flat on the floor or—if you have tight hip flexors—up on the bench. The point is to keep the lower back as flat against the bench as possible. If you raise your lower back and buttocks, you're not only shifting the lifting responsibility away from the muscles you're trying to train, but you can injure your lower back.

- Your upper arms should be perpendicular—at 90 degrees—to

the torso, and your hands should be positioned on the bar so that the thumbs are approximately shoulder-width apart. The same hand and arm positioning applies if you're using dumbbells.

- Perform the lift through the entire range of motion, from when the bar is touching very lightly on the chest at nipple level to complete elbow extension. (Touching the bar lightly to the chest encourages you to follow the full range of motion.)

- Don't bounce the bar off your chest. The most difficult segment of the bench press, "the sticking point," occurs at a point just above the chest. It's tempting to bounce the bar past this point, but doing so lessens the effectiveness of the exercise.

- Proper breathing is very important: Inhale while lowering the bar toward the chest and exhale while pressing the bar away from the chest.

- Don't make the mistake of lowering the bar quickly after you've raised it to its highest point. Current research in strength training indicates that the return phase—the "negative" movement—is the most important element in strength-building. Therefore, lower the bar to your chest in a slow, smooth manner, completing the lowering movement in approximately twice the time required for the pressing movement.

- Don't use an extremely wide grip on the bar. The shoulder is designed mainly for mobility rather than strength, and overloading these muscles using a wide grip can result in a serious shoulder injury.

- For general strengthening and conditioning, do three to four sets of 10 to 12 repetitions with a heavier weight; in your next session, do 15 to 17 repetitions with a lighter weight (the first set being a warm-up in both cases). The exercise should be performed two to three times per week.—*Gerald Greenspan, M.S., founder of Columbus (Ohio) Fitness Consultants*

MOTIVATION Less Rest, More Spice

you control your movements. Mix up a couple weight exercises with five to 10 minutes of aerobics.

Dianne Leicht, 26, a Phoenix-based personal trainer, suggests you remember what you want to accomplish as you exercise. "I want people to get results," she says. "The first day they meet with me, I ask what their short- and long-term goals are. I tell them, 'You told me you wanted this; now we have to do it!'"

Here's one of Leicht's training methods. "Try to spice up your workout by throwing a circuit training program in, as opposed to just a regular strength training program. Move from machine to machine, or station to station at a rapid pace—as long as

"For example, you can do the leg press, leg extension, leg curl, then go on the bike for 10 minutes, then do seated rows and lat pulldowns, move to an upper-body-intensive cardio machine, then to the chest press. This way, you're keeping your heart rate elevated and you're keeping it exciting, rather than doing a set, then resting, then a set, then resting. You'll feel like you've gotten a really good, hard workout."

Leicht reminds you that if you don't see results in one month, check your food intake. What you eat will affect what gains you make.

—*Carrie Muskat*