



CHEST WORKOUT GUIDE

**MUSCLE
& FITNESS**

CHEST

BEGINNER

FOR MOST GUYS, "CHEST DAY" IS the best day of the week, training-wise. Here we set you on the right path in your chest quest with a machine-heavy routine that primes your pectorals for more specialised training down the road.

Some things to keep in mind...

➤➤ As a beginner, err on the light side when choosing a weight. If you can't finish the listed reps, it's too heavy.

➤➤ As a note for here and throughout the issue, if you see a decreasing rep scheme, pyramid up the weight each set; if the reps are the same set to set, choose one challenging weight and use it for all the listed sets of that exercise.

#1

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Smith-Machine Incline Press (or) Decline Barbell Press*	3	15, 12, 10
Machine Pullover	2	10
Pec-Deck Flye	2	10
Push-Up (or) Parallel-Bar Dip*	2	10

* On your first and last exercise, switch back and forth between the two listed options, workout to workout.



DECLINE BARBELL PRESS

START: Lie back on a bench set to about a 30–40 degree decline. Grasp the barbell with an overhand, slightly wider than shoulder-width grip. Lift the bar from the supports and hold it over your lower chest, arms extended.

MOVE: Lower the barbell to your chest, touching down to your lower pecs lightly before pushing the bar back up to full extension.



SMITH-MACHINE INCLINE PRESS

START: Position yourself on an incline bench (about 45 degrees) so that the bar touches the top of your chest just below your collarbone. Once your position is set, get up and load the bar, then lie back onto the bench and grasp the bar with a slightly wider than shoulder-width grip.

MOVE: Press the bar straight up, stopping just short of elbow lockout. (Feel your pecs contract to bring your arms up above your torso.) Pause at the top and lower the bar under control to your upper chest.



MACHINE PULLOVER

START: Sit in a pullover machine, grasping the handles with both hands while placing your elbows against the elbow pads.

MOVE: Bring the handles down in front of your torso, pause for a moment, then return back to the start under full control. To keep your pecs active, put more emphasis on pushing the bar down with your hands, rather than leading with your elbows pressing against the pads. In addition, actively flex your entire chest as you pull the bar down; using this "flexing" technique on all your chest exercises will help you develop the mind/muscle link that in time gives you pinpoint control over your muscles and their actions.



PEC-DECK FLYE

START: Sit in a pec-deck station, placing your elbows and forearms on the pads. For best results, position your arms so that your elbows fall just below your shoulders, and limit the stretch to just behind your chest.

MOVE: Squeeze your pecs to bring the pads together in front of your chest. Flex your chest hard at the moment in the exercise when your elbows are together and always lower the weight under strict control. Don't bounce.



PUSH-UP

START: The traditional "drop-and-give-me-50" push-up is done with a flat back and hands just outside your shoulders (on steps or the floor).

MOVE: Press to full extension, keeping your elbows pointing out, and lower under control. Don't sag in the middle.



PARALLEL-BAR DIP

START: Grasp the bars with your arms extended and locked. Lean forward, bend your knees and cross your legs.

MOVE: Keep your elbows out to your sides as you lower yourself down, dropping until your upper arms are about parallel to the floor. Squeezing your palms toward each other in an isometric fashion, begin pressing back up until your arms are again fully extended. Be sure to keep leaning forward or the exercise focus will shift more to your triceps.

DO YOU ALWAYS FIND YOURSELF short on time? No problem — we give a 15-minute workout for every bodypart in this issue, starting with chest.

➡➡ The first two exercises and the last two are compound sets, which are two exercises for the same bodypart done back to back with no rest in between. For instance, on your first set you'll do the Smith-Machine flat-bench press for 12 reps, then immediately pick up two dumbbells for 8 reps of the neutral-grip flat-bench press.

➡➡ Rest 30–60 seconds between compound sets (by the way, this general guideline applies to all compound sets within this book).

#2

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Smith-Machine Flat-Bench Press (compound set with Neutral-Grip Flat-Bench Dumbbell Press*	3	12, 10, 8
Seated Chest Press	2	15
Exercise-Ball Dumbbell Flye (compound set with Exercise-Ball Push-Up	2	12, 10
	2	To failure

* For the Smith-Machine press, pyramid the weight up, choosing a higher weight for each set; on the dumbbell press, choose a challenging weight and stick with it for all three sets. Note: Here and elsewhere throughout this book, Dumbbell stands for dumbbell



SMITH-MACHINE FLAT-BENCH PRESS

START: Position yourself so the bar lands at the middle of your chest. Then get up, load the appropriate weight, lie back on the bench and grasp the bar with a slightly wider than shoulder-width grip.

MOVE: Keep your elbows pointing outward as you press the bar straight up. Pause at the top, then lower the bar until it lightly touches your chest. If you reach failure without a spotter, simply rack the bar on the closest hook.

NEUTRAL-GRIP FLAT-BENCH DUMBBELL PRESS

START: Grasping two dumbbells, lie on a flat bench and turn your wrists so they face each other, hands at each side of your torso.

MOVE: Press the dumbbells upward, allowing them to naturally move toward each other at the top (without touching). Then reverse the move back to the start, getting a good pectoral stretch at the bottom.





SEATED CHEST PRESS MACHINE

START: Position the handles of the machine so they line up with your mid to upper chest, sit back in the seat and grasp the handles with an overhand grip.

MOVE: Press the handles straight out in front of you until your arms are fully extended but not locked, then slowly bring your hands back toward your chest without letting the weights touch the stack.



EXERCISE-BALL DUMBBELL FLYE

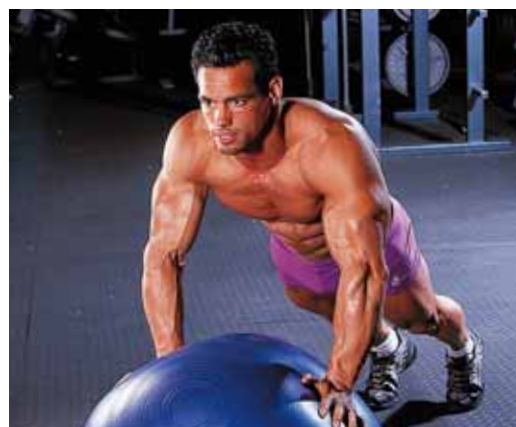
START: This exercise is similar in execution to the flat-bench flye, except that here your body works harder to keep you stabilised. Grab two dumbbells and lie back on a ball so that you face the ceiling. Extend the dumbbells out to each side of your body, maintaining a slight bend in your elbows to protect them from hyperextension.

MOVE: Without altering the angle in your elbows, bring the dumbbells up in an arc toward each other, stopping just short of touching over your chest. Lower them back along the same path to the start. To get more upper-chest emphasis, lower your hips toward the floor and perform in the same manner.

EXERCISE-BALL PUSH-UP

START: This one will really work your shoulder stabilisers and improve your strength, balance and muscular coordination. Make sure the ball is fairly secure, and with your hands on the ball and feet on the ground, get into push-up position.

MOVE: Keeping your body straight as a plank, lower your chest to the ball by bending your elbows (let them point outward as you descend). Once you reach the bottom, press yourself back up to the start.



WHETHER YOU ALWAYS WORK OUT

at home, or you have an adjustable bench, a barbell and dumbbells at home for days you don't feel like trekking to the gym, we offer you effective workouts with minimal equipment.

➤➤ Don't do the incline barbell press at home unless you have a spotter; if you're by yourself, replace this with dumbbell incline presses, which are just as effective.

➤➤ If your bench doesn't decline, try putting a 45-pound plate under one end of the bench (don't stack plates more than one high, for safety reasons).

#3

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Incline Barbell Press*	4	15, 12, 10, 8
Incline Dumbbell Flye**	3	8, 10, 12
One-Arm Dumbbell Flat-Bench Press**	2	8, 10
Decline-Bench Dumbbell Flye**	3	10, 12, 15

* Pyramid up the weight each set.
 ** For these exercises, start with the heaviest weight you can, and drop the weight on each successive set.



Whether barbell or dumbbell, incline presses target the often-lagging upper pec region.

INCLINE BARBELL PRESS

START: Lie on an incline bench and grasp the racked barbell with a moderate-width grip, palms facing the ceiling. Lift the bar off the rack and raise it until your arms are fully extended.

MOVE: Bend your elbows to lower the bar to just below your neck; at the bottom, your elbows should be out and away from your body but slightly in front of your shoulders. Contract your chest muscles and extend your elbows to press the bar up until your elbows are almost locked out.



INCLINE DUMBBELL FLYE

START: Set an incline bench at a 45-degree angle. Grasp a pair of dumbbells and sit on the bench so that your back is flush against the pad. To start, raise the weights directly over the centre of your upper chest so that your arms are nearly straight, palms face each other and the dumbbells touch.

MOVE: Keep your elbows bent slightly throughout and begin lowering the dumbbells out and down to your sides in an arc. When your upper arms are in roughly the same horizontal plane as your torso, your palms should face the ceiling. Retrace the same path to raise the weights, squeezing them together by forcefully contracting your chest muscles.



ONE-ARM DUMBBELL FLAT-BENCH PRESS

START: Grasp a dumbbell and lie face up on a flat bench. Extend your arm to lift the weight directly above your chest.

MOVE: Bend your elbow to lower the dumbbell to a point just outside of but in the same horizontal plane as your chest. Your elbow should be out to your side and slightly in front of your shoulder joint. Press the weight back up and in by simultaneously squeezing your pec and fully extending your arm. Finish your reps and repeat with your other arm.

DECLINE-BENCH DUMBBELL FLYE

START: Lie on a decline bench holding a dumbbell in each hand. To start, raise the weights directly above the lower half of your chest so that your arms are nearly straight, your palms face each other and the dumbbells touch.

MOVE: Keep your elbows bent slightly throughout and begin lowering the dumbbells out and down to your sides in an arc. When your upper arms are in roughly the same horizontal plane as your torso, your palms should face the ceiling. Raise the weights back up in an arc, retracing the path of descent. Squeeze the weights up and together by forcefully contracting your chest muscles.



WINNER OF THREE PROFESSIONAL

bodybuilding shows during the first three months of 2004, Dexter Jackson has risen to elite status in the sport. At 5'6", 225 pounds, "The Blade" beats larger competitors with his amazing symmetry and unwavering conditioning.

In his chest routine, Dex takes advantage of compound-setting to really burn in the muscle detail.

➤➤ For pressing movements, Dexter likes using an explosive upward motion and a controlled descent. On flies, he uses a methodical, even cadence throughout.

➤➤ He's also a fan of machines for their stability — when moving heavy weight, a fixed range of motion brings a welcome level of safety to the exercise.

#4

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Flat-Bench Barbell Press	4*	6-10
Hammer-Strength Incline Machine Press (compound set with)	3	6-10
Cable Crossover	3	6-10
Smith-Machine Incline Press** (compound set with)	3	6-10
Flat-Bench DB Flye	3	8-10

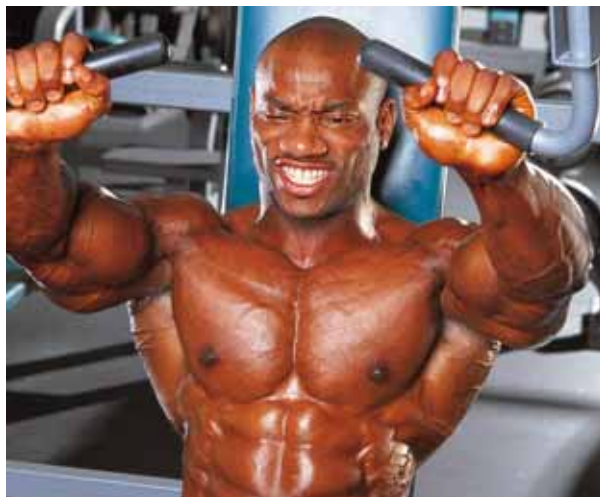
*Does not include four warm-up sets of 10 to 12 reps with a lighter weight. ** See first page for description.

FLAT-BENCH BARBELL PRESS

START: "Barbell presses are the quintessential mass-builder," Dexter says. "I always put them first in my routine so I can go as heavy as possible." Lie face up

on a bench with your feet flat on the floor. Grasp the barbell with an overhand grip, your hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.

MOVE: Unrack the bar and slowly lower it toward your chest. Keep your wrists aligned with your elbows and your elbows pointed out to your sides. When the bar just touches your chest, press back up explosively, driving the weight away from you until you almost lock it out.



HAMMER-STRENGTH INCLINE MACHINE PRESS

START: Adjust the machine so your back rests comfortably against the pad and your feet are flat on the floor. The handles should be aligned right at or just below shoulder level when you sit down.

MOVE: Using an explosive motion, concentrate on flexing your pectorals as you press the handles away from you. Avoid locking out your elbows at the top. "Don't forget to squeeze your chest hard at the peak of the contraction," Dexter says. "Just because you're not locking out doesn't mean you can't concentrate and contract at the top." Slowly reverse the motion — for full development, contracting the working muscles on the ascent and controlling the descent is an absolute necessity — and go right into the next rep.



A

CABLE CROSSOVER

START: Attach handles to the upper or lower pulleys on a cable machine. Stand in the direct centre of the machine with your knees slightly bent, your focus forward and your stance stable. Shift your weight to the front to help maintain your position during each rep. Grasp the handles with your palms facing each other and bend your elbows slightly.

MOVE: In a simultaneous downward/inward motion, bring the handles to a point in the front of your midsection, keeping your arms slightly bent. Pause a moment and squeeze out a peak contraction before slowly allowing the handles to return to the start position, resisting the weight as you do so.



B



A



B

FLAT-BENCH DUMBBELL FLYE

START: Lie on a flat bench with your feet on the floor and your back pressed against the pad. Begin with your arms straight up from your shoulders, and the weights directly over your chest. Your palms should face each other and your elbows should be slightly bent.

MOVE: Slowly lower your arms out to your sides until your wrists come to about shoulder level or slightly above, then bring your arms back toward the midline of your body, focusing on using the centre of your chest to draw them back together. "My repetition speed is the same on both the positive and negative portions for flyes," Dexter notes.

CALIFORNIA'S OMAR DECKARD

knows size. Competing at a massive 260 pounds, the super heavyweight built his foundation by training like a powerlifter. Now his routine reflects a mix of those strength-lifting concepts and the higher-rep sets needed to bring about a muscle pump.

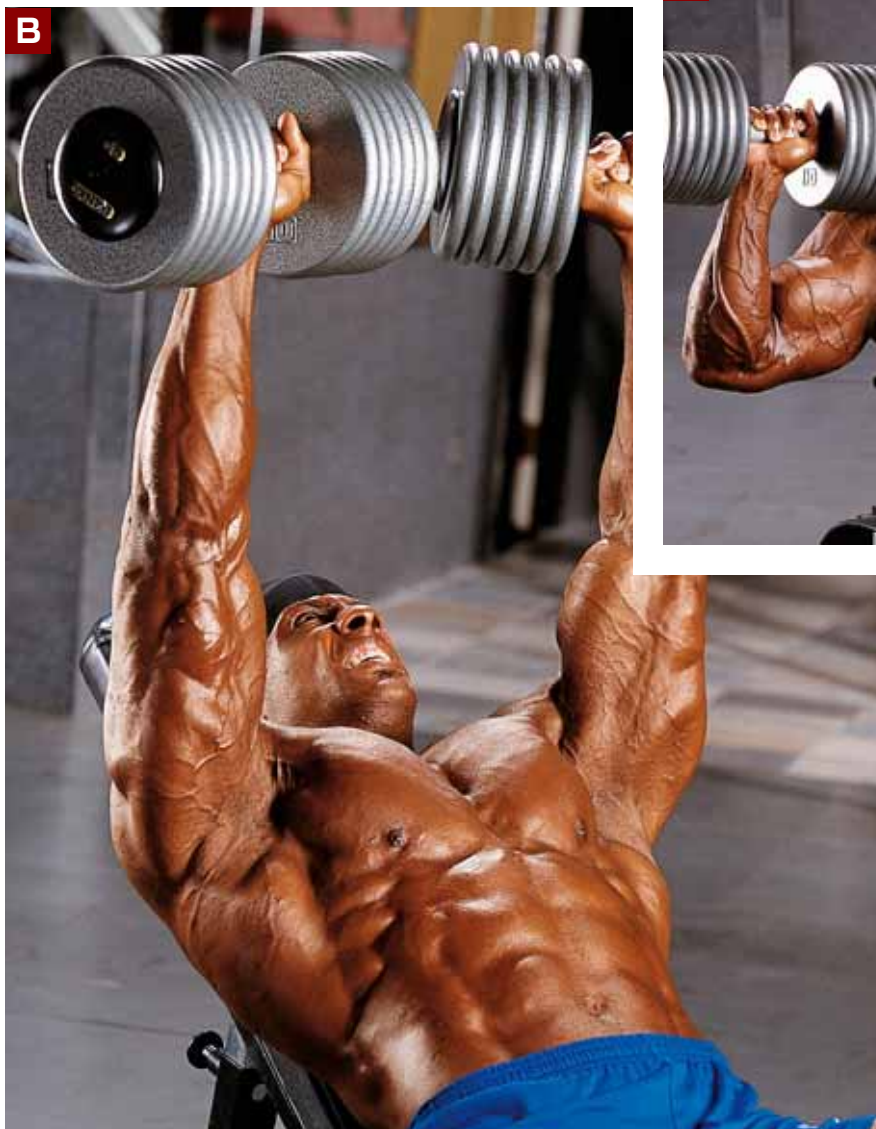
➤➤ “Your first exercise is the most important one in your workout because that’s when you’ll be able to push yourself the hardest,” Omar says. “Choose mass movements like the bench press to start.”

➤➤ To build your pecs, a squeeze at the apex of every rep is vital.

#5

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Flat-Bench Barbell Press*	3	warm-up
	2	10, 6
Incline Dumbbell Press	4	12-15
Pec-Deck Flye	3	10-15
Dumbbell Pullover	3	6-8

* Find a description of this exercise in Dexter's workout.



INCLINE DUMBBELL PRESS

START: Lie squarely on the incline bench, which should be set at a fairly low angle. Hold the dumbbells just outside your shoulders.

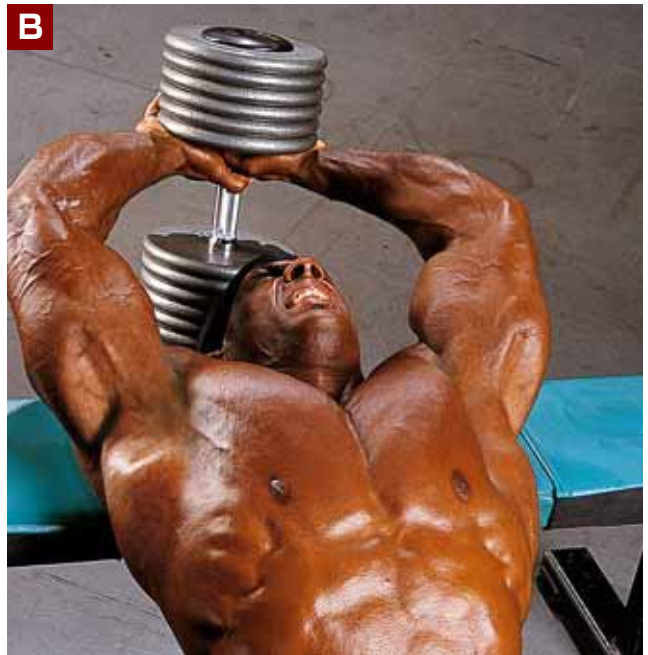
MOVE: Forcefully press the weights up in an arc until your arms are fully extended above your chest. Reverse the motion, being sure not to overstretch your shoulders by lowering the weights below chest level.



PEC-DECK FLYE

START: This version of the pec-deck flye machine has handles instead of elbow pads. (Both versions of the pec deck are effective, acceptable choices.) Adjust the seat so that your shoulders, elbows and hands are on the same horizontal plane after you grab the handles.

MOVE: With your back squarely against the pad, forcefully bring the handles all the way together, making sure to keep your elbows up to make the movement more efficient and to reduce the risk of injury. Reversing the motion, allow the handles to go back to a point at which you feel a strong stretch in your pecs before beginning your next rep.



DUMBBELL PULLOVER

START: Lying across a flat bench, keep your glutes low, which affords you a greater stretch.

MOVE: Holding the inside edge of a dumbbell at arm's length overhead, allow the weight to go behind you, keeping your arms straight, stretching your pecs and lats but keeping your hips down. Reversing direction, pull the weight back up, breathing out only after reaching the uppermost position to ensure that your core is stable throughout the movement.

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR

competitors in the IFBB, Nasser El Sonbaty has heaved plenty of weight in his 15 years as a pro. Like most of his peers, he changes his workouts often, but this particular routine is a great example of how he combines presses and flies for a more intense, and thus more productive, session.

➤➤ “A technique that works well for me is rest/pause,” Nasser explains. “I may do a set of 6–10 reps on an incline dumbbell press, pause for 10 seconds, do another 4–5 reps, rest again and finish with 1–3 reps.”

➤➤ Nasser recommends choosing a heavy weight, but not so heavy that you can't get at least 6 reps in the set.

#6

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Incline Dumbbell Press* (compound set with) Flat-Bench Dumbbell Flye	4	6–10
Decline Dumbbell Press (compound set with) Decline Dumbbell Flye	3	6–10
Standing Cable Crossover**	2–4	8–15

* Find a description for this exercise in Omar's workout.
** Find a description for this exercise in Dexter's workout.



FLAT-BENCH DUMBBELL FLYE

START: With a dumbbell in each hand and a slight but unchanging bend in your elbows, lie on a flat bench and allow the weights to travel out and away from your body in a wide arc.

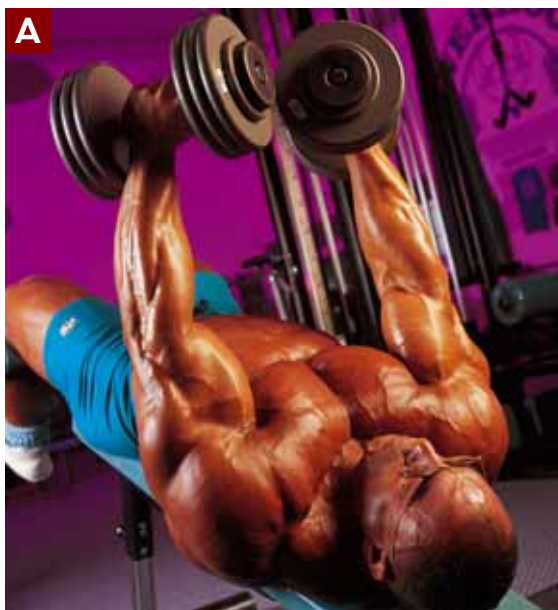
MOVE: Feel the stretch, then contract your pecs to forcefully raise the weights overhead while keeping the angle in your elbows nearly constant.



“Think ‘squeeze the pecs’ at the top of presses and flyes,” Nasser says.

A

B



DECLINE DUMBBELL FLYE

START: When he does the decline press with dumbbells, Nasser will go right into the decline flye as the second half of a compound set. With a weight heavy enough for presses, he doesn't get a really deep stretch at the bottom but still strives for a decent range of motion. Lie back on a decline bench and hold a pair of dumbbells overhead, keeping your hands in a neutral (palms-facing) position.

MOVE: Maintaining a slight bend in your elbows throughout, power the weights up in a wide arc, keeping constant tension on your chest by not locking out at the top nor allowing the weights to rest against each other. When lowering the weights, fight gravity to gain the benefit of the negative.



DECLINE DUMBBELL PRESS

START: Lie back on a decline bench and hold the weights directly over your pecs.

MOVE: Resist the negative as you lower the dumbbells until they just touch your lower-chest region. In a forceful movement, power the weights up but don't lock out. "I think 'squeeze the pecs' at the top," Nasser adds.



MORE WORKOUTS TO TRY:

#7) You can use this routine, which hits the upper chest hard, in combination with...

#8) ...this lower-chest programme. If you train chest twice per week, do #7 the first time and #8 the second. Or just rotate between them from workout to workout.

Also, if you're not familiar with a drop set, here's how it works: in your last set, complete the prescribed number of reps (in these two cases, 10); then immediately drop the weight and do 5 or so more reps.

#9) If you're all about moving more weight in your bench press, this no-frills routine is aimed squarely at strength.

#10) Up for the challenge? Using the Swiss ball, you can improve your balance and coordination as you improve your pecs.

#11) If you'd like a fast and simple workout, take advantage of the Smith Machine, which is perfect for pressing. On the "Smith Push-Up (feet up)" set the bar to about hip height, then place the tops of your feet on the bar and your hands on the floor. For the feet-down version, turn around, grasp the bar with both hands and get into push-up position with both feet on the floor.

#12) This high-rep routine will improve your muscle hardness.

#13) If your triceps often overpower your pecs, try pre-exhaust, where you hit your pectorals with an isolation move first (no direct arm involvement) followed by a compound move.

#7 UPPER CHEST EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Incline Barbell Press	4	12, 10, 8, 6
Incline Cable Flye*	3	10, 10, 8
Seated Chest Press	3	10†
Feet-Elevated Push-Up	2	15

* Place an incline bench in a cable station.

† Last set, do a drop set [see text at left for details].

#8 LOWER CHEST EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Decline Barbell Press	4	12, 10, 8, 6
Decline Cable Flye	3	10, 10, 8
Flat-Bench Dumbbell Press	3	10†
Exercise-Ball Push-Up	2	15

† Do drop set on last set.

#9 POWER UP YOUR BENCH PRESS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Barbell Bench Press	8	*
Flat-Bench Dumbbell Press	4	10, 8, 5, 5
Incline or Decline Cable Flye†	2	12

* 15, 12, 10, 8, 5, 3, 2, 1; pyramid up the weight each set.

† Rotate incline and decline every other workout.





#10 SHOCK ROUTINE

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Swiss-Ball Dumbbell Press*	4	12, 10, 8, 8
Swiss-Ball Dumbbell Flye*	3	12, 10, 10
Incline Dumbbell Press	3	10, 8, 6
Parallel-Bar Dip	2	To failure

* Same as the bench version, except you lie on a Swiss ball.

#11 SMITH MACHINE

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Decline Smith Press	4	12, 10, 8, 8
Flat-Bench Smith Press	4	10, 10, 8, 6
Incline Smith Press	4	10, 10, 8, 6
Smith Push-Up (feet up) (compound set with)	2	12-15
Smith Push-Up (feet down)	2	12-15

#12 HIGH DEFINITION

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Multi-Angle Dumbbell Press	3	18*
Hammer-Strength Press	3	12-15
Tri-Set:†		
Pec-Deck Machine	4	12
Dumbbell Pullover	2	12
Push-Up	2	15-30

* Adjust the incline 3 times during set; start at 30 degrees, then 45, then 60. Do 6 reps per angle. † Like a compound set, except with three exercises.

#13 PRE-EXHAUST

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Incline Dumbbell Flye	3	15, 12, 10
Incline Barbell Press	3	8, 10, 12*
Pec Deck Flye (compound set with)	3	12
Seated Chest Press	3	8, 10, 12*
Dumbbell Pullover	2	12, 8

* In this book, a reverse rep scheme means you should reverse-pyramid your weights, starting with a heavy weight first and going lighter each subsequent set.