

## **Rotation for Recuperation**

### How to Exercise Sensibly for Results

by Charlie Skeen

To maintain proper health, everyone knows we need to eat correctly, drink a sufficient amount of clean water each day, take vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other helpful supplements such as digestive enzymes and essential fatty acids, and meet the body's requirements for sleep and rest.

### **Exercise Regularly**

Another area that is vital for maintaining our health now and as we age, is making sure we exercise regularly. To many people, exercise can mean many different things. Examples would be walking each day, aerobics classes, Pilates, bicycling, playing basketball, or some form of resistance training. Some feel that the work they perform is their exercise.

It has been my experience over the last 35 years that most people do not exercise regularly. Also, many people who do exercise, do it sporadically and engage in forms of exercise that do not completely address the form and function of their bodies, aggravating such problems as back weakness and pain, poor posture, weak abdominals, rotator cuff injuries to the shoulder joint, knee pain, poor balance and coordination, loss of strength, weight gain due to loss of muscle, reduced flexibility, and lack of energy.

### **Walking is Not Sufficient**

There are many ways to exercise, but using a well designed program of weight training can condition our bodies to reduce and even prevent the problems listed in the previous paragraph. While taking walks everyday is beneficial, you are not going to prevent low back pain, maintain your strength, prevent loss of muscle and weight gain, keep your spine healthy and flexible, and stimulate bone growth. Some may say that they perform other exercises that are more vigorous in nature that work up a sweat. While this may be true, all too often these people wind up with some form of injury. This is because they are using certain muscles all the time while others are neglected creating imbalances or weaknesses. A properly designed exercise program strengthens the body in such a way that imbalances are eliminated. Exercises need to be geared toward our individual fitness levels. This is where resistance training comes in.

### **Resistance Training**

Resistance training simply means that you are putting resistance against the muscle. An example of this would be a dumbbell curl. As the biceps muscles contract curling the weight up, force is exerted producing tension in these muscles. Two things occur: One, the muscles of the biceps are forced to move a load, or resistance, from point A to point B which over time strengthens the muscles as they adapt to the resistance. This form of exercise also prevents the person from loss of muscle tissue helping to maintain the metabolism for fat burning. The second thing that occurs, is since the muscles of the biceps are attached to the lower part of the arm and the shoulder joint, the bones act as anchors which create force or tension causing more efficient absorption of nutrients such as calcium, more effectively maintaining their strength and size. Simply put, resistance training keeps you from gaining fat, helps to burn fat, strengthens your body to easily accomplish everyday tasks, and prevents and reverses bone loss as research reveals.

Resistance training can be done with elastic bands, your own body weight, or as this article is highlighting, free weights and machines. Free weights and machines can be adjusted for a person's individual strength and fitness level.

### **Exercise Program Using Free Weights and Machines**

People reading this article will of course be at various fitness levels. Some may be using free weights and machines already, some may have just started, others may have never used them. No matter what your level of experience, this program can be adapted to meet the needs of anyone.

### **Avoid Overtraining for Progress and Long Term Enjoyment**

Many people who engage in a program of weight training end up being overtrained to the point that they quit exercising altogether, which is a common problem. We have to remember that weight training, pushed too hard and too fast, will not allow the body to adapt and recover, and will have negative results such as extreme

muscle soreness, stiffness, and even physical exhaustion. When we exercise, especially with free weights, we have to make progress slowly and deliberately with periods of rest. Exercising with free weights and machines does not necessarily build muscle. When sufficient stress is placed upon the working muscles from resistance training, physiological changes occur within those muscle fibers. After you finish exercising and eat, and rest, the body will adapt to the stress by making the muscles stronger. As the process is repeated, you will notice that the weight you have been lifting feels lighter and you have to increase the resistance. As long as this process is not forced by overtraining caused by lifting too much too soon, or exercising too long and frequently, you can make reasonable and comfortable progress. In fact, you will look forward to your workouts.

### Rotation for Recuperation to Prevent Overtraining and Continued Progress

When starting an exercise program, many people make the mistake of doing too much too frequently. As a result, they get frustrated and eventually quit. Also, people get injuries from pushing their body too hard too soon. To prevent these things from happening, and so you can make exercising a lifetime pursuit to maintain a healthy body weight and health, I am going to show you how you can plan your exercise program.

First, what does Rotation for Recuperation mean?

Whenever you lift weights or use machines, you are putting stress on the body in two ways. The first is when you use resistance on a particular muscle or group of muscles. In this case, let's say you just performed a set of seated dumbbell curls. You have just stressed the biceps muscles. This is called localized stress. But you have also subjected your body to stress a second way. Stress in any form also affects the glands, organs, and immune system. This is called systemic stress because it affects the entire body. This is why it is very important to get sufficient rest between bouts of exercise to allow the body to recover from both local and systemic stress. Failure to do this will result in overtraining and exhaustion making you more susceptible to illness. Also, you will make very little, if any progress in strength and fitness. You can actually become weaker and more unfit. It would be only a matter of time before someone in this situation would give up exercising which is what happens each year to thousands of people.

To considerably reduce and prevent overtraining, exercise in a way that allows your body to recuperate. This is where Rotation for Recuperation comes in. This is a simple technique that I learned over 25 years ago from Frank Calta, a gym owner in Florida, who was suffering from overtraining. He learned it from someone else and made tremendous progress. I used this system with my gym members and they were pleased to find that they were feeling much better, had more energy, got stronger, and actually looked forward to working out.

The way Rotation for Recuperation works is that you do not exercise the whole body when you work out. You split your muscles groups so that you exercise one group twice a week and the other muscle group once. The following week the muscle groups are reversed and alternated each week thereafter.

**A sample program is provided below.**

<b>Tom's Workout Program</b> Workout sessions per week are three. Monday, Wednesday, Friday	
<b>Muscle Group 1</b>  Back Chest Shoulders Arms	<b>Muscle Group 2</b>  Calves Legs
<b>NOTE:</b> The waistline, or abdominals, are worked every session.	

In the first week, the muscles in **Group 1** would be exercised twice that week - Monday and Friday, while muscles in **Group 2** only get worked once. The following week, **Group 2** gets worked on Monday and Friday, and **Group 1** on Wednesday.

This means that every two weeks the muscles would have four days of rest between workout sessions instead of three. Separating your muscle groups and rotating the groups every other week it allows the body to get more rest and to recuperate.

**Please note the chart below listing the muscle groups and their rotation.**

<b>Rotation for Recuperation</b>		
<b>First Week</b>		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
<b>Muscle Group 1</b> abdominals	<b>Muscle Group 2</b> abdominals	<b>Muscle Group 1</b> abdominals
<b>Second Week</b>		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
<b>Muscle Group 2</b> abdominals	<b>Muscle Group 1</b> abdominals	<b>Muscle Group 2</b> abdominals

On the third week you just repeat. This will allow you an extra day's rest between muscle groups every other week for recovery.  
 The exercises are split into two muscle groups:  
**Group 1** - back, chest, shoulders, and arms; **Group 2** - calves, thighs, and hamstrings (leg biceps).  
**Note:** You will work your abdominals three days a week after warm-up and before your other exercises.

**Selection of Days to Exercise**

The chart used above is just an example. You can also choose Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, or any other combination of days that will fit your schedule. It is best though if you can have a least one day of rest between workout sessions.

**Starting the program**

If you have already been working out for a while with free weights and machines, you can make up your two muscle groups and start the rotating split program right away. But if you have not worked out for a while, or if you are new and wish to start, you must first go through a conditioning period to get your body into shape.

The conditioning program will be done three times a week. You will exercise your entire body at each session. The exercises to perform are listed as follows:

**Overall body warm-up** - Walk on treadmill for 5 minutes to get your body prepared to exercise. It will warm you up and increase your heart rate and breathing, letting your body prepare itself for physical activity. Also, you will be more mentally prepared to focus your attention to the task at hand.

**Light Stretching of lower back and hamstrings.**

**Abdominals - Floor Crunches**

Work your abdominals all three days after your warm-up and light stretching.

To assist you in performing these floor crunches properly, I have provided an explanation and pictures below.

Get into position by lying on the floor with a small towel placed under you low back. This will allow for a complete stretch of the muscles in the down position activating more muscle fibers and producing a greater contraction when you perform crunches.

### Leg Placement for Floor Crunch

As the pictures show, you want to have your legs pulled up so your feet are close to your buttocks. Cross your legs and feet at the ankles.

### Hand Placement for Floor Crunch

Place your hands behind your head to gently support it, but at no time pull on your head or neck. The only muscles you want to contract are the abdominals.

### Performance

Begin the floor crunch in the position described above and in the pictures below. The back of your hands should be touching the floor with your head on top of your hands. Your neck should be relaxed. Your legs should be completely relaxed so that your knees are just above the surface of the floor.

To begin take a deep breath and begin to blow out the air slowly through your lips as you focus on curling your body at the waist by contracting the abdominals. Gently support your head as you come up while at the same time, with the heels of your feet on the floor, bring your knees up in the finished crunch position as shown in the picture.

Make sure you exhale as you crunch to tighten the abdominal muscles more thoroughly. Squeeze hard at the top for a count of 2 then slowly lower yourself down, while taking a deep breath, and repeat for six reps. Rest for about 30 seconds and repeat. You should work your way up over time to three sets of 10 reps with only 30 seconds of rest between sets. **NOTE:** As time goes by, try not to increase the repetitions but instead, focus on increasing your concentration to contract your abdominal muscles harder. Do not throw yourself up. Let your abdominal muscles do the work.

### Floor Crunch

**Side View  
Start Position**



**Top View  
Start Position**



**Side View  
Finished Position**



After you have warmed up and finished the floor crunches the following muscles and exercises will be done.

**Calves** - Standing Calf Raise 1 set of 12 repetitions.

**Thighs** - Sit down squats on chair or bench. 1 set of 10 repetitions.

**Hamstrings** (Leg Biceps) Lying Leg Curl. 1 set of 10 repetitions.

**Lower Back** - 45 degree back extension. 1 set of 10 reps. If your lower back is too weak, perform only 4 reps and add 1 rep every week until you can manage 10 reps.

**Upper Back and lats** - Lat Machine Pull-down to the front with a shoulder width grip. 1 set of 10 reps.  
**NOTE:** Never use a wide grip or pull the bar behind your head. It is too stressful to the shoulder joints.

**Chest** - Machine Chest Press. 1 set of 10 reps.

**NOTE:** Make sure the Chest Press machine is adjusted so your elbows are below your shoulder joints in the down position. If the elbows are too high the shoulder joints are more easily damaged.

**Shoulders** - Seated dumbbell press. 1 set of 10 reps.

**Arms** - No direct biceps or triceps exercises as these small muscles will get sufficient work from the chest and back exercises. You will work these muscles directly after your 4 week conditioning period.

To finish your workout stretch and then walk on the treadmill for about 5 minutes. Over time, you can increase the duration on the treadmill as you become better conditioned. You may walk on the other days, too.

**NOTES:** This program should not take more than 30 minutes once you are familiar with the exercises. Only do one set of every exercise listed even if you feel you can do more. This is a conditioning period in which you are learning to perform the movements properly. Increases in weight and sets will come over time as your body naturally grows stronger and gets into better shape.

**Breathing:** Concentrate on exhaling as you press, curl, or pull the weight and inhale as you lower.

Use weights that will allow you to perform the movements comfortably for the given rep range. After four weeks of following this program, you can then switch to the **Rotation for Recuperation** program.

<b>Rotation for Recuperation</b> <b>Your Workout Program</b> Workout sessions per week are three. Monday, Wednesday, Friday (or other days you have chosen)			
<b>Muscle Group 1</b> Back Chest Shoulders Arms - triceps & biceps		<b>Muscle Group 2</b> Calves Legs - thighs & hamstrings	
<b>Muscles</b>	<b>Exercises</b>	<b>Muscles</b>	<b>Exercises</b>
Back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45° back extension</li> <li>• Lat-machine pull-down to the front</li> </ul>	Calves	Standing calf raise
Chest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chest Machine Press</li> </ul>	Thighs	Bench or chair squats
Shoulders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seated dumbbell press</li> </ul>	Hamstrings	Lying leg curls
Triceps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tricep push-down with v-handle</li> </ul>		
Biceps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seated dumbbell curls</li> </ul>		
<p><b>NOTE:</b> The waistline, or abdominals, are worked every session.</p>			
<p><b>Please Note:</b> Never perform biceps exercises with a straight bar as it does not allow your wrists to naturally turn and twist outward as you curl, creating a great deal of stress which can cause damage and pain.</p>			

**Sets and Repetitions**

For your 1<sup>st</sup> set perform 12 repetitions. Rest for about 2 minutes then perform another set of 8 repetitions with a slight increase in resistance. You should be able to perform the 2<sup>nd</sup> set comfortably without struggling.

Continue to work with the 8 reps until you work your way up to 10 reps over a period of time. Then you can slightly increase the resistance starting your 2<sup>nd</sup> set with 8 reps again. Never make increases until the resistance feels comfortable and you are not straining to move the weight. Remember, this is training, not straining.

The program of weight training I have described here is more than enough to help you get into shape, maintain it, and be able to fit into your schedule. If you wish to go to 3 sets of each exercise, you can if you

remember to make progress slowly. Make sure though that you have worked out for a period of 6 to 12 weeks with the 2 sets before adding a third. If you do, I recommend that the rep range of the third set would be 6 where you would work up to 8 reps before adding resistance. Take your time, make progress slowly, increase resistance only when you are ready. To alleviate boredom and to hit the muscle from different angles you can vary exercises every 6 to 12 weeks. You may not want to change every one but you can incorporate a change on different body parts from time to time.

### **Take A Break Every 12 Weeks**

You may want to gear down your program every 12 weeks and train lightly for a week or two. This will help the body to recover from your workouts and prevent overtraining. When you start again, make sure you allow your body to adjust slowly back to the level you were before you took your short break. This way you will prevent extreme muscle soreness and stiffness. Researchers have discovered that taking about 400 I.U. of natural vitamin E about 1 hour before working out, muscle soreness was reduced considerably. This is because free radicals are produced during exercise contributing to the stiffness and soreness. The vitamin E quenches the free radicals reducing their damaging effects.

### **Proper Exercise Technique**

I realize that many people do not know proper exercise technique and just as many think they do. To assist you with developing proper form for maximum effectiveness and safety and how to stretch properly, I highly recommend a book called *The Insider's Tell-All Handbook on Weight-Training Technique* by Stuart McRobert. It sells for approximately \$25.00 including shipping. I am not affiliated with Mr. McRobert and I make no money from this recommendation. This is my way of helping people who want to know how to exercise the right way and get results. This book can only be purchased from Mr. McRobert from his web site called [www.hardgainer.com](http://www.hardgainer.com).

As a final note, this article is only a general guideline for exercise selection. Each person must find exercises best suited for them. Also, if you have not exercised for a while, have a health problem or injury, a family history of heart disease or blood pressure, please get a physical before engaging in any exercise program.

In future articles I will present other exercises and their proper techniques so you can get the maximum benefit from them.

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