

5 BEST EXERCISES ... PROBABLY !

1. Squat

This is the best exercise for the lower body (and variations of), it ought to be included in all exercise programmes. It strengthens all the lower body, hips and back, the core is also heavily involved to ensure stability. Another thing to consider is that there is a danger aspect to the squat i.e. the very act of lifting the bar and the realisation that you must complete the lift or be pinned underneath causes a certain hormonal response.

The Squat is also a true functional exercise. We constantly squat during every day life whether getting up from a chair or getting in and out of a car etc.

Most experts agree that you cannot reach your strength potential without Squats.

2. Bench Press

This is one of the main compound multi-joint exercises for the upper body. It works the chest, front deltoids, triceps and lats depending on how you do it. Most other pressing exercises are variations of the Bench Press (incline variations have a good carry over to most sport).

3. Dead Lift

Lift a "dead weight" from the floor. This strengthens the legs, hips, back, core, shoulders, grip ... in fact most of the body ! It can be difficult to get the technique right and shouldn't be done with poor form. It is another truly functional exercise. We dead lift constantly through daily life when we pick things up from the floor. It is also an excellent test of strength and therefore can be a yardstick to measure progression in your training (do it right or see a chiropractor !).

4. Shoulder Press

Press a bar or dumbbells above your head. This is an excellent shoulder exercise, in fact some experts would argue that the shoulder press (or a variation of it) is the true upper body pressing exercise. (Note the Olympic lifters and their take on the shoulder press incorporated in the clean and jerk, clean and press and push press.) Among other areas it strengthens the complete shoulder region and if done standing up, heavily involves the core to ensure we remain upright. Bonus !

5. Bent Over Row

Bend over, keep the back straight and a proud chest and row a weight from near the floor upwards to your torso. Again it is sometimes difficult to get the correct technique. This is probably the best upper body pulling exercise you can do (along with pull-ups). It strengthens the back, biceps, shoulders, core and legs and if done correctly can greatly improve posture.

Flexibility

It is very important to understand that if you are not flexible in certain key areas (calves, hamstrings, glutes, quads, thorax, lumbar spine and shoulders) you will not be able to do these exercises effectively or safely. You may cause unnecessary strain and injury. Seek advice.

Core strength / stability

Please note that 4 out of the 5 exercises mentioned here heavily recruit the core in a real functional sense. There is a lot of rubbish talked about regarding core stability which should really be called core strength ! Some form of rotational exercise will help with flexibility and force transfer from legs to torso and in to arms. However, do the above mentioned basic exercises as a priority and your core will take care of itself.

"6 packs are made in the kitchen and not in the gym". This leads me on to my next point.

Nutrition

Without the correct nutrition you will not realise your true potential. As that old bat from the TV says "you are what you eat"... which should really say "you are what you digest" (but I won't waffle on about gut health here).

Re-cap

Squat – legs, hips, back, core.

Bench Press – chest, shoulders, arms.

Dead Lift – legs, hips, core, back, shoulders, grip ... pretty much everything!

Shoulder Press – shoulder girdle, triceps, core.

Bent Over Row – back, biceps, shoulders, and core.

That about covers the whole body in 5 high quality, multi joint exercises. Have direction in your training and train smart !

Health and strength summary

Eat protein and healthy fat stuff, eat loads of green and vibrant coloured stuff, drink pure filtered water and of course, lift stuff up (there is a tad more to it than that but this is a very good start !)