

# MORE ON BUFF MEDICINE

by Dr. Glenn R. Hoey, N.D., CSCS, ACSM

## Training

Perhaps the most challenging issue of being buff is how to train. There are numerous books on the subject, but it is clear to see that many dedicated gym enthusiasts (and trainers also) unfortunately are not benefitting from their training. I have watched the same individuals year after year dutifully doing their gym routine and still look the same. Don't get me wrong, I give them credit for being there and making an effort when approximately 95% of the population still hasn't caught on. But it is sad to see that the efforts have not created a noteworthy change in their look. I keep thinking that if they knew really how to train and how to optimize their body's adaptation systems they would look and feel great without spending their whole life in the gym.

So, fine, you say, Dr. Smarty-pants, what do you do? How are you supposed to train?

Well, fine, I say, here is my answer. Think of your body as a big chunk of marble that you are going to sculpt into a beautiful statue. Think of exercises as various tools to do the sculpting. Does a sculptor use only one tool to create a masterpiece? Obviously not.

Different tools perform different functions; different exercises "sculpt" in somewhat different ways. A sculptor doesn't just start sculpting, they create an image, usually a drawing or a model of what they wish to see in the end. With this goal in mind it becomes clear what they wish to create. It is no different with your body. Do you want to get bigger? Smaller? More fit? Or do you want to go for it and get really buff? The funny thing is that it does not require 10 times more time or commitment to be really amazingly buff, but it takes the right tools in the right combinations to dramatically alter the look of your body.

OK, then, what exercises work best? It is true they are not all created equally. I subscribe to the "best bang for the buck" theory. In other words, I like exercises that given similar time and effort yield the most results. What are they? Easy.

## The basics

Meaning the compound muscle group exercises, such as dips, deadlifts, pull-ups, presses, squats, rows, and good mornings (there may be a few others, and pardon me if I did not list your favorite, like the Mesopotamian kumquat straddle lift, but many others are basically a variation on the above theme). Notice I did not include leg extensions, leg curls, triceps extensions, dumbbell kickbacks, and other isolation exercise wastes of time and energy. Also notice that the 'big boy' or 'deep end' exercises are not done with machines. (I'll rant about machines some other time but I will tell you now the more you avoid machines like a bad case of cold sores, the more buff you will be). So-o-o-o you will go a lot further developing a phenomenal body if you stick with fundamental exercises that blast a lot of muscle at the same time. ¿Comprende?

Now I bet you are asking, How much? How often? How now? (Well, maybe not How now?, because I don't know what that means.) Great questions! The more you use basic exercises and challenge your body, the more taxing they will be to both the musculo-skeletal and the nervous system. Therefore, your exercise selection, rep and set scheme will all profoundly affect your results. Again, what are your goals? Strength? Size? Tone? Stamina? Cleaner socks?

The key is to train enough to stimulate your body's natural adaptation response (making it a 'good' stress) before you go ballistic and feel the need to do every exercise in the bodybuilder's encyclopedia (leading to overtraining and 'bad' stress). If you want to train for strength then minimize your reps to 5 or less and rest 3-5 minutes between sets. The old time strength athletes were doing this 100 years ago and performing amazing feats of strength before supplements, steroids, and silicone implants. This way of training allows you to recover faster and train more frequently. This is a great way for women to train because it will dramatically increase muscle 'tone' while adding very minimal size or 'bulk'. For example, 2 or 3 well-placed sets of 5 squats or deadlifts will do more to create a dramatic re-shaping of a woman's legs and backside than all the leg lifts, leg extensions, or whatnot she will ever do. She will shave hours off of her training time, leave the gym with a spring in her step, come to the gym with a gleam in her eye and a song in her heart, and have a great time looking at her newly contoured body as she tries on new clothes at Nordstrom.

How about if you want to get big? More is better, right? More exercises, more reps, more sets? No, not necessarily. You can build a gnarly physique with 1 exercise if you were really pressed for time. (In my book, either a deadlift or squat by itself could create profound changes in your physique.) If you add dips, or pull-ups, or some kind of press to that you'd have all you need. That is why basic exercises work so well. They blast muscles from all different directions. You want great triceps? Dip, baby, dip or press, baby, press! You want great biceps? Deadlift! Or do pull-ups, or heavy rows! Notice I didn't include curls here, or triceps extensions, or dumbbell kickbacks for the arms. These isolation exercises just don't deliver much wallop for their effort, even if you get a good 'pump' or feel the 'burn'. If you want size, concentrate on lifting heavier and heavier weight, then do more sets of 5 reps, or 3 reps. Why not do sets of 8, or 10, or 12?

Because 2 sets of 5 at a heavier weight stimulates growth more than 1 set of 10 at a lighter weight, and by growth I mean true muscle growth, not just more glycogen and water in the muscle (pump).

How often you train is subject to many variables: the number of exercises you perform, the number of sets and reps, the amount of rest intervals, how long you have been at the "iron" game, how stressed your life is, and how much sleep you get. In short, how quickly you recover from your last workout. Many trainees 'split' their routine into upper and lower body and attempt to do both of these 3 times per week on alternating days. This will quickly lead to cumulative overtraining. Even though you are not training the same body parts per se each day, the amount of systemic fatigue from training accumulates quickly, almost exponentially, and soon progress halts. Workouts become a battle of will, and you soon lose the desire to train. What's worse, you are far more prone to injury, and you may begin to notice other less desirable effects like poor immune system function (colds and other 'bugs' you cannot shake, or worse). At this point, heed your body's plea to stop! Take time off, rest, feed yourself right, and seek professional help (like a trainer, oh, you thought I meant that type of professional help!)

The 'physical culturists' of yesteryear never trained to exhaustion. They built impressive strength with simple yet effective exercises like deadlifts and presses. They trained before benches, squat racks, creatine, and ESPN (how did they do it?)

## About the Author

Glenn R. Hoey, N.D. is a licensed Naturopathic physician practicing in Wenatchee, WA. He is a graduate of John Bastyr University. He has nearly 20 years of clinical experience in the natural treatment of numerous disorders and conditions. Dr. Hoey also is an CSCS. ACSM certified Personal Trainer with 30 years experience in weight training, bodybuilding, athletics, sports medicine, sports nutrition and biochemistry. Dr. Hoey has brought these disciplines together to create Buff Medicine, to serve the needs of athletes and fitness enthusiasts.

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