



Push-Ups: The Magical Upper Body Exercise

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Push-ups are a great exercise for the chest muscle group, and they don't require any equipment. But, do you know that they also work the arms, shoulders, back and abs? Yes indeed, you can get a lot out of a push-up if you do it in just the right way.

Level I - How to start

If you haven't done pushups, it's best to start with your hands on a wall. If that's too easy find gym bench, a couch, or a long stair like the one I have here. Anything that puts your upper body up higher than the ground will make it easier for you if you're a beginner.

Level II - If you're strong enough

If the above way is too easy, you can get onto flat ground. On your knees is the easiest way, and on your toes is hardest.

Whatever fitness level you're at right now - Incorporate the following points for a most effective push up:

1. For the standard push-up, place your hands directly under your shoulders, and then move them just a little wider
2. Pull your shoulder blades down, and away from your neck, and keep them there the entire time you do the exercise. This will definitely work your back more, and keep your neck from getting sore.
3. Pull your abdominal muscles in and tuck your glutes under a little. This will work abs, and keeps your low back from getting sore.
4. Make sure your body stays in one straight line, and don't let your hips rise into the air
5. If you're on your toes, straighten your legs so that your knees are stretching in the back, push your heels away from you.

If you're doing it right, you'll feel as though your entire body is working by just holding yourself in position.

1. Once you've got yourself into the proper positioning as stated above, bend your arms until your elbows reach about a 90 deg angle and your upper arm is parallel to the floor (if that's too hard, just go down as far as you feel comfortable) and then push yourself back up.
2. Keep the proper positioning the entire time you do the exercise.
3. Do as many as you can.
4. If you're at one of the easier levels and you can do 25 or so, try one of the harder options.

If you've been doing push-ups for a while, there are many ways to make them harder and more intense. I do these with my clients and classes while I can supervise them to make sure they are safe. But if you haven't been doing them this way, I suggest you give it a try. It really makes a difference!

It's recommended that you talk to your doctor before starting to workout. This is basic exercise information for the general public. If you have injuries or other physical limitations, this exercise may not be appropriate. A good rule of thumb: If it doesn't feel good- don't do it!

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