Ask Joe Weider: Omega-3, a key to healthy living

by Joe_Weider

Tip of the Week: Train larger muscle groups first, then smaller ones.

If you want to get the most out of your workouts, you need to structure them accordingly. This means beginning with larger body parts and working your way down to smaller ones. The reason for doing this is twofold.

For one, larger muscle groups require more energy, so doing them first when you're freshest allows you to give them the effort they require. Secondly, the smaller muscle groups of the upper body often play a role when training the larger ones.

For example, let's say you're training your chest. Any pressing or dipping movement will call your triceps into play. Therefore, you'll want to train chest before training triceps. Were you to train triceps first, they would likely fail during your chest workout before your larger pectoral muscles ever do, therefore not allowing your chest to be worked thoroughly.

You should even consider the role smaller muscle groups play when training larger ones when you structure your week. Just as you shouldn't train biceps before back, you shouldn't schedule biceps to be trained the day before back either, assuming you train them on separate days.

Remember, if you want big results from your training, go big first.

Q: Everywhere I turn, I see an article on EFAs here, a report on the benefits of fish oil there. I know that certain fats are important, but could you give me a simple explanation of what EFAs are, the best way to get them and how many I need in a day? Thanks!

Joe: I agree that EFAs seem to be all the rage in health news these days, but there's good reason for their popularity. EFAs are invaluable for their health benefits. In fact, they're essential to your existence, hence their name â€” essential fatty acids. EFAs fall under the category of polyunsaturated fats, one of the four types of fats we can consume, with the other three being monounsaturated fats, saturated fats and cholesterol.

As is also the case with essential amino acids, essential fatty acids are considered essential because the body cannot make them, so they're a dietary requirement. Once we consume EFAs, our bodies break them down and convert them into a host of chemicals required for a variety of life processes.

EFAs contribute to the health of just about every organ in the body, including the brain, nervous system, heart, kidneys, blood, skin, hair and muscles. There are three EFAs I'm sure you've heard of: Omega-3, Omega-6 and Omega-9 fatty acids. Of the three, Americans are most commonly deficient in Omega-3 and therefore should supplement their diets with it. Because our bodies can produce Omega-9, we don't need to worry about consuming it. And because Omega-6 is found in refined vegetable oils, which are in most processed foods we eat, we should focus on Omega-3.

Assuming you're in good health, I would recommend taking two to three 300-milligram capsules of Omega-3 fish oil a day. This will provide you with 600 to 900 milligrams of Omega-3 fatty acids, which should be enough to provide a wide range of health benefits to you.

Q: I heard a guy at my gym talking about fascial stretching. What exactly does this mean, and is it something I should be doing?

Fascial stretching is all the rage in bodybuilding, it seems. There are many proponents of this technique who swear it will allow an individual to grow larger muscles. I, for one, am not convinced.

The fascia is soft connective tissue that alternately surrounds and penetrates all of the body's internal organs, including the muscles, bones, organs, nerves, blood vessels and other structures. In anatomical illustrations, it can be seen as a white covering over the muscles of the abdominal region and over the tips of the fingers and toes.

The theory behind fascial stretching is that where the fascia covers muscles it can limit growth, kind of like the difference between filling a vase with water and filling a balloon. Because a vase can't expand, the volume of water can't increase as it does with a balloon.

While this makes sense in theory, the fact is that fascia is by nature viscoelastic, meaning that it can expand and contract according to what's underneath it. When muscles grow, the fascia conforms accordingly.

I have nothing against fascial stretching per se, but I don't believe it will yield you significantly greater muscle gain than if you don't do it.

Joe Weider is acclaimed as "the father of modern bodybuilding" and the founder of the world's leading fitness magazines, including Shape, Muscle and Fitness, Men's Fitness, Fit Pregnancy, Hers, Golf for Seniors and

others published worldwide in over 20 languages.

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