Ask Joe Weider: Do-it-yourself home gym

by Joe_Weider

Tip of the Week: Whatever it is you're looking for as you aim to reach your fitness goals, the odds are you won't find it in a pill.

While I'm not implying that there aren't a number of good supplements on the market, I am saying that what you're looking to achieve can be reached primarily by way of diet and exercise. Of course, this isn't something many people want to hear. Being able to take one pill to make you bigger and another to make you smaller is a much more appealing scenario than a life of discipline and hard work.

Supplements should always be seen as just that â€" supplements to your diet and exercise regimen, which can add the finishing touches, but should never be considered the base component of your weight-loss or weight-gain plan.

Q: I'm a mother of three young children and don't have the time to go to a gym, but I want to get back into the kind of shape I was in before I had my first child seven years ago. So is it possible to get toned exercising at home with a minimum of equipment? I don't have the resources to buy one of those home gym systems or the room.

Joe: You can absolutely get into great condition without joining a gym. Of course, the advantage of gyms is that they have everything you could possibly need to work every body part all in one place. Still, there's no reason you can't get an effective workout with a few simple pieces of equipment and a little ingenuity.

One of the great new trends in fitness is the use of bands. They're rubber tubing of varying thicknesses with handles or straps attached to the ends. What's great about them is that they're lightweight and portable and don't take up much space, yet they can provide great resistance for people of a wide range of strength levels.

In addition to purchasing a set of bands, I would recommend getting a chinning bar. Even if you can't yet perform a chin, having a bar in a doorway gives you the chance try every time you pass under it. You can also do hanging leg raises from the bar.

You'll also want a few pairs of dumbbells. Better yet, there are adjustable locking dumbbells that are like having several sets in one.

Finally, you'll want a cushiony mat for floor work, like crunches and lying leg raises. All told, you can spend

less than $100 and have everything you need to give you great workouts for years.

Q: Can you give me your list of the single best exercises for every body part? I'm pressed for time all the time but figured if I could create a circuit in which I hit every body part with one exercise and did it three times, I could train my whole body this way two or three times a week. So, what do you think?

Joe: I'm asked variations of this question a lot, and truthfully I'm reluctant to provide an answer. The reason is that no one exercise should be performed at the exclusion of others. Ideally, you want to hit a muscle from a variety of angles to best strengthen, tone and develop it.

However, I do think that doing a circuit as you intend is certainly better than doing nothing, so I will provide you with the list you ask for. Keep in mind that just because an exercise meets my personal criteria doesn't mean it's right for you. For example, while I might prefer barbell or dumbbell curls, you might need to do preacher curls because of shoulder limitations. Only you know what works best for your body.

That being said, here is my list of "best" exercises, body part by body part:

Chest: dumbbell bench press.

Back: barbell row.

Shoulders: seated dumbbell press.

Biceps: seated incline dumbbell curl.

Triceps: V-bar press-down:

Abdominals: bicycle kicks.

Thighs: squat.

Calves: standing calf raise.

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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