Ask Joe Weider: Shoulders can be widened -- with work

by Joe_Weider

Tip of the Week: Want to burn fat and get your heart in shape? Lift weights!

Most people think of bodybuilding as an activity that will give you big muscles, maybe some strength, but not much else. Well, I've got news for them! Not only will bodybuilding training build muscle and create strength, but it'll also burn fat and even turn you into a fat-incinerating machine.

If you keep the rep range high (12 to 20) and keep the pace of your workouts quick (30 seconds or so between sets), you can keep your heart rate elevated and your fat stores being drawn upon for energy.

Not only that, but because muscle requires more energy to simply exist than does fat, once you have developed muscles you will burn more calories than you otherwise would. In other words, bodybuilding, when tailored to your specific needs, can be a win-win situation!

Q: Hi, Joe. I'm 19 years old, and I'm trying to get my shoulders as wide as possible. I'm 6 feet and 180 pounds, so I'm trying to put on about 20 pounds of muscle anyway. But beyond that, I want really wide shoulders. That looks impressive even in clothes. Problem is, it seems my shoulders structurally aren't very wide. So is there anything I can do to actually stretch them out and make them wider?

Joe: From the sounds of it, you have somewhat narrow clavicles. The clavicles are the curved bones that run across the top of your ribcage out nearly to the ends of your shoulders. Their length, or lack thereof, is the biggest factor when it comes to the width of one's shoulders, and unfortunately there's nothing you can do to grow them.

While this bit of news may disappoint you, what I will tell you next should hearten you. Just because you have narrow clavicles doesn't mean you're doomed to narrow shoulders. One of the all-time great bodybuilders

who also happened to be the first Mr. Olympia, Larry Scott, also had narrow clavicles â€” but he didn't let that stand in his way of becoming the best bodybuilder in the world. Larry set himself to the task of building cantaloupe-sized deltoids at the ends of his clavicles and in time becoming known for his shoulder development.

Larry saw his narrow clavicles as a challenge, not as a defeat. Through focused and intense training, he managed to overcome his structural deficiency and become a champion. I encourage you to read about Larry and follow the routine he used to build his own shoulders. Just remember, Rome wasn't built in a day and neither were Larry's delts. With patience and persistence, you will reach your goals.

Q: I'm a 29-year-old woman and am in good shape. I exercise four to five times a week and on a good week six times. For me, exercising could include going to the gym, riding my bike 10 miles to and from work, jogging at night or taking yoga. I am mostly happy with my figure, but I think that my waist is too thick for my thighs and hips. I would like a nice curve there, but instead there's straight up and down. I'm fairly lean as it is, so how do I reduce my waist size?

Joe: If, as you say, you are already lean, you might consider if you're doing too much in the way of abdominal exercises. Although it sounds like your exercise regimen is well-rounded and not too focused on any one aspect, it is possible that your abdominal muscles are highly receptive to stimulus and therefore grow faster than other muscle groups. In this case, you would want to scale back your abdominal training, especially the obliques, which are the muscles running along your sides.

If, however, you are not emphasizing abs in your training, I would suggest you try working your gluteals and outer thighs to create the curves you seek. While you wouldn't be reducing your waist, you would be creating a visual cue that would make your waist appear smaller to the eye. Narrow-stance squats, leg presses with your toes pointing slightly inward and stiff-legged deadlifts all work the areas that can create a nice flow from waist to thigh.

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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