



A Step Above

Personal Training Concepts

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.—Mark Twain

Jinjer's thoughts . . .

BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES CAN BURN FAT



As summer comes to a close, many of my students and friends have commented that it's so hard to get back into their training routines — especially those parents who are juggling the demands of a hectic, full-time work schedule and the demands of bringing up children with their team sports and after school activities. It can be a circus. Nevertheless, for parents and non-parents alike, if you can't find time for your workout at the local gym ... **"don't give up!"** There are exercises you can do at home or in a hotel room while on a business trip ... maybe even in your office

at work ... which require little or no equipment.

Bodyweight (BW) exercises are one of the oldest forms of training but, at the same time, are still at the top of the list for achieving leaner muscle mass and core strength while burning calories for weight loss. BW training leans out your muscle mass naturally and increases your core strength to the maximum of your bodyweight's abilities, agility, and flexibility. This does not grossly increase your muscle mass like using free weights and weight machines such as a body builder or a power lifter would do.

How do BW exercises work? Is there a law of **gravity**? Yes! It's up to you to know how to change the exercise in order to allow gravity to create resistance to movement. For example: when doing a push-up, change the positions of it. Do several on the ground (only for those readers who know how to do a push-up correctly). Feel how heavy your body is when pushing against gravity back to the up phase? If you were not pushing, you would feel

how the body just wants to fall to the ground. Now manipulate the push-up by changing the direction at which the force is accelerated and do it from an elevated bench. You will see that the bench push-up is easier. Then do one on the wall and it will appear effortless. As the position changes and becomes more vertical verses horizontal, the push-up gets easier. This is one reason, as a personal trainer, I will teach wall push-ups to a sedentary person first. Afterwards, as they progress in training, I will transfer their training to an elevated bench; and later, with strength increases, move the BW exercise to the floor. The down side to body weight exercises is this: if a person is overweight or sedentary, they may not be strong enough to perform even one repetition of certain BW exercises when executed on the floor. Are there other exercises they can do and still receive the benefit?

Absolutely! Nevertheless, this type of training is not geared to untrained, sedentary people. I would recommend these individuals join a health club and/or hire a personal

trainer to help them learn fitness concepts such as transfer of body weight in order to assist in core strength and balance. Furthermore, start performing cardiovascular fitness at a low dose (low and slow), and then incorporate the resistance bands, very light medicine balls, dumb bells and proper use of weight lifting machines in order to learn proper skill acquisition and breathing. Then, when work levels can be completed easily; gradually and incrementally increase the exercise prescription to another level. This way, you can learn to adhere to exercise successfully over a period of time set by the trainer. This prevents injuries and assists in reaching health-related fitness goals without negative feedback.



BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES *(continued)*

BW exercises can increase your heart rate enough to possibly burn anywhere between 300-500 total calories in a given hour. You would want to perform a workload that is a bit harder than just comfortable (meaning you might be sweating a bit). However, this would depend upon the person's physical fitness levels and the assumption they don't have any serious medical restrictions hindering their performance. However, before implementing a pretty intense BW exercise program into your schedule, you might want to consider a few things. To avoid injury, keep things low and slow. Learn and understand proper skill acquisition of your techniques or form before pushing yourself or increasing your workload. This allows you to work up to your desired goals in fitness. Studies have shown that strength gains can still be achieved when training **one day on, one day off** continually throughout a week. Most weight loss programs work when using this type of training format. For example: working out on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at moderate to high intensity (heart rate is up; embrace a slight discomfort for only seconds) emphasizes positive results in fitness. Here is a vivid example of someone who only does BW exercises.

Imagine an Olympic gymnast. How many people in gymnastics do you know who lift weights most of the time to achieve their leaner muscle mass? Think of all a gymnast might do on the parallel bars, jumping and tumbling, etc. They would be a perfect example of learning how to put together one of these routines in a general fitness paradigm -- i.e., lunges, kick holds, squats (squat kicks) pull ups (forward or backward grips), push-ups (superman push-ups, lat push-ups, triceps push-ups, incline and decline push-ups) planks (standard plank, side plank, incline and decline plank), triceps dips, Spiderman, abdominal work, jump

training (vertical jumps, up and back jumps, box jumps), one-legged squats, etc.

Professional gymnasts train almost every day, rehearsing until movement is precise. They incorporate different speeds of movement, isometrics (holding a position such as an extended kick, without joint angle changing -- or maybe when doing a push-up, pausing on either the down or up phase and holding it for a few seconds), intensity of training, change of fitness variables such as speed and timing of a movement, or use "jump training" (also known as plyometrics) when doing their jumps and flips over and over again. This type of training is quick and powerful. Plyometric training enables the muscles to reach maximal force in the shortest time possible. It also increases the heart rate quickly. So skipping, hopping, one-legged jumps, depth jumps, box jumps, etc., all have a power effect on the intensity of training in an effort to burn more calories. Have you ever noticed the leanness of the gymnast's legs? Nice, lean, powerful legs that you know are so strong and can endure all that training for hours. I guarantee their heart rates can race to the max (based on age and fitness level) when repeating their routine time and time again. Whether it be from doing cartwheels, flips, or rolls to walking the balance beams, swinging on the parallel bars or using the vaulting horse, it takes extreme bodyweight strength and core muscle control.

When putting together a bodyweight exercise program, it's not as boring to some as spending hours on the cardio equipment trying to burn calories and loose weight. Some reasons why people find this type of training to be less beneficial or boring are: (1) They cannot do the exercise correctly and therefore get injured, or don't know how to modify the exercise to best fit themselves;

(2) They don't know how to put together an effective routine that will keep their heart rate up in order to increase caloric expenditure during exercise; (3) They don't know which bodyweight exercises to do or in what sequence to perform them. For example, doing alternate upper and lower body exercise, starting out slow and low for beginners (using the easier exercises) and increasing repetitions of the exercise or using timed intervals as the body gets stronger. (4) They don't understand how to manage their training days in order to reduce the risk of injury and work the body more efficiently.

Bodyweight exercises will keep your muscles talking to you. And the best part is ... **NO** equipment is needed. Yes, training with cardio equipment and weight machines is still beneficial, but this article is geared to the person who can't get to the gym but who craves a great workout at little cost. Furthermore, even for those "Gym Rats," bodyweight exercises should always be incorporated into their routine. I have had my clients ask me if this type of training is even beneficial. Yes! Proper understanding of the exercise itself, knowledge of how it's performed and changing fitness components (such as implementing isometrics, increasing speed or time of the movement, and changing the angle of the exercise without compromising the joint) can improve one's overall total wellness, muscular strength and endurance in addition to making workouts fun and simple at a very low cost while still burning total calories quicker and in a shorter amount of time when it's impossible to go to the gym.

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