

# Classified Muscle Building

## Chest



Nick Nilsson's Top Secret "Mad Scientist" Training Strategies For Building a Monster Chest

# FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Welcome to "Classified Muscle Building...Chest"

From:  
Nick Nilsson

Ok, you're reading this because you want a great chest...a godlike (or goddesslike!) chest that turns heads at the beach. Well, you've come to the right place.

Here's what you need to keep in mind when reading and using these tips...this is not frills...**no pictures, no videos, just INFORMATION**. Read and understand each tip before trying so you know exactly what you're doing. Use at your own risk...uncontrolled explosions of muscle growth and strength may result. **Please read "Terms & Conditions" at the bottom of the report.**



If you have questions about any of the techniques, my secret contact drop box is [betteru@fitstep.com](mailto:betteru@fitstep.com)

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## WARNING!

Any exercise program contains an element of risk. Be aware that the exercises and training techniques in the book may not be familiar to you and, even though every attempt has been made to ensure safe instruction, how and if you decide to execute the exercises is ultimately your responsibility. Consult your physician before taking part in any exercise program. By reading the information in this book you hereby agree to the Terms and Conditions of use, found in this book.

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# CHEST EXERCISES

Primary Movers: pectoralis major and minor

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## THE EXERCISES

### 1. FLAT BARBELL BENCH PRESS

Lie down on a flat bench. For best shoulder health, space your hands so that at the bottom of the movement, your forearms are perpendicular to the ground. Take the bar off the rack. Lower it slowly to the nipple line then press up in a backward arc so that the bar finishes approximately over your face.

Comments:

Keep a natural but not excessive arch in your back during the movement.

Pressing to the neck is potentially dangerous and can damage your shoulders with repeated use. Do not bounce the bar off your chest or allow the weight to drop quickly out of control. This has the potential to cause sternal or rib damage.

Do not abuse your spotter by letting him/her do all the work.

Try to keep the bar level throughout the movement - if the bar tips to one side you will put excessive stress on your shoulders.

Use collars if the weights slide.

Don't use collars if you are benching alone and there is no one around. Without collars you can tip the barbell and slide the weight off instead of letting it slowly crush you.

A wider grip will work the pecs more and a narrower grip will work the triceps and shoulders more. Don't go too wide, though, as that can damage the shoulders. As well, those who use a very wide grip tend to be more prone to bridging and rebounding.

If you do bench alone, respect your limits and keep the do or die rep in you because if you don't, you might die.

Do not lift your butt off the bench.

Inhale on the way down, exhale on the way up.

Exhale forcefully on the instant of direction change.

Plant your feet and legs parallel to the bench not at an angle.

Keep your elbows tucked in during the descent.

Keep your feet on the ground. Putting them on the bench not only destabilizes you, you lose the power of the leg push.

The path of the bar is actually like an "S". It should go towards your feet a little as you come up then back towards the head like a stretched "S". It is a small movement—only an inch or two forward and back.

Beginners do far too much bench press.

When you specialize too much in bench press, the problem usually starts in the crown of the shoulder at the tie-in of the delts and traps. This indicates not enough rear work (e.g. back and rear delts) to balance the strength of the chest.

Another problem area is the pec tie-in with the biceps and front delt. This is a result of too much work and poor form, e.g. the bar hitting the chest, rebounding, bridging excessively.

Behind the neck pulldowns and presses can aggravate rotator cuff problems from the bench press. Don't do behind the neck exercises.

Don't move your feet when struggling at the end of a set. This breaks your power base. As soon as you do that, you're done for. Focus on the muscles that are working and locking yourself solidly onto the bench.

Don't overtrain the movement pattern. Take a break from barbell bench for awhile. 99% of people take no break from it.

A good explosive, light warm-up for the bench press is the rest on your knees on the end of the bench. Fall forward, catching yourself on the bar in the bench press position then throwing yourself back up to vertical and letting your hands leave the bar. This is light and it helps remove

deceleration inhibitions (see below).

Flat bench also works the outer head of the triceps.

Think of the pecs as pulling your arm in rather than pushing up.

Where to bring the bar:

On the flat bench, you should bring the bar to the point where the breastbone ends (for most people). A bit higher is okay but don't go lower as this makes it difficult to keep your elbows under your wrists.

Breathing during bench press:

When you are using heavy weights for low reps, don't breathe during the rep. You will have more power if you hold your breath during exertion. The reason for this is that when you breathe in or out, the rib cage is forced to relax. This keeps you from maintaining a solid foundation. Take a deep breath before you start the rep and hold from start to finish. This is only when you are doing heavy weight for low reps. For regular training (four or more reps), you should breathe so you can actually do the reps.

All Pressing Movements:

Always keep your elbows directly under the wrists. If they are inside or outside you give away power laterally, pushing out instead of up. This is seen most often in wide-grip bench. It aggravates the shoulders and can cause stretch marks. For most, your hands should be placed where if you extend your thumbs on an Olympic bar, they can touch the smooth rings. This is just a guideline.

Keep your wrists straight. Don't cock them or allow them to twist during the exercise. This causes undue stress on the wrist and reduces power in your shoulders, chest and arms.

Grip the bar firmly. A false grip can be potentially dangerous if the bar rolls.

Deceleration:

One of the limiting factors in the bench press is that part of the force from the muscles is used to decelerate the bar to keep it from throwing your shoulders out of the socket. Your body does this by firing the back muscles. At 81% of your max, 52% of the range of motion is used to decelerate the weight. At the max, it is 23%. This can be a cause of sticking points. Your nervous system is thinking about slowing the weight down during the movement, limiting your pushing power. The lighter the load, the greater the deceleration needed. This limits your explosiveness. It is also one of the reasons predicted 1 RM's are very inaccurate.

You can overcome nervous system holdback with plyometric training like medicine ball throws (they aren't heavy enough, though). Some alternatives include drop push-ups with your feet elevated (start upright then fall down and push up explosively off the floor). If you do explosive bench press, just concentrate on exploding out of the bottom. Another option is the throw and catch bench press. This is best done on the vertical bench press machine but can be done on the Smith machine with two spotters. On the vertical bench simply throw the weight right off your hands. It's not going anywhere and it is perfectly safe as you aren't under a bar. You can catch the weight and do another explosive rep (this is the best way) or catch it with the foot lever then do another explosive rep from the bottom. The Smith machine version entails having your two spotters catch the weight after it leaves your hands and when it's upward velocity reaches zero just before it drops back down. Set the safety racks at the bottom and have two spotters you can

trust. Use 40 to 50% of your max.

Another technique for overcoming deceleration is to attach chains to the bar. The increasing weight of the chains as the bar goes up help to decelerate the weight without requiring muscular involvement.

Tricks:

1. Grip - to make sure the pecs are doing as much work as possible, use a feather grip. This means rest the bar on the heels of your hands but do not wrap your fingers around the bar. Rest only your fingertips on the bar and press on the underside of the bar with your thumbprints. This is not a false grip where your thumbs are on the same side of the bar as your fingers. The bar may roll if you do that. The thumb on the bar will give you control. Another trick is to slightly rotate or angle your hands so that your pinkies are slightly pointed back towards your head. This position forces the tension onto the pecs and will not allow you to lock your elbows out completely. Do attempt to lockout, however, as this will force the pecs to contract hard. Be extremely careful with this technique and only use it if you are very comfortable with the exercise. Use it with light weights only.
2. Foot placement - there are three common ways to place your feet: on the floor, on the bench, or wrapped around the bench support. Wrapping your feet around the bench support will anchor you to the bench and will prevent you from lifting your butt off the bench.
3. Try to imagine forcing your elbows around something big and round as you press up to focus the contraction on the pecs.
4. If you're trying to overcome a sticking point in your bench there is a simple way to do it. On your last rep, when you hit the sticking point, hold the weight there for as long as possible in an isometric contraction (no helping from your spotter until the weight starts to drop). The isometric contraction will strengthen the muscle at the exact sticking point.
5. Before you do any bench press, bring your shoulder blades together underneath you to further isolate the chest. Work them as far down and back as you can, as if you are trying to touch them behind your back, making your shoulders as narrow as possible. This will help to reduce deltoid involvement in the pressing action. This has the added action of reducing the range of motion slightly because your torso is now thicker than when your shoulders are flat.
6. As you push up, thrust your rib cage and sternum up while pushing your rear delts down.
7. Driving with your legs is a part of the bench press few people understand. Your feet should be on the floor, feet and legs parallel to the bench. Your knees should be bent at about 80 degrees with your heels dug into the floor. Squeeze your glutes to raise your butt up. At the moment you begin to push the bar up, drive with your feet. In essence, try to use your heels to slide your body up the bench. The weight will keep you from sliding but that push backwards will translate into upward push on the bar. That is why your lower legs should be angled back—so they can push. Practice using your feet to slide yourself up the bench with just the bar to get the feel for the action.
8. Try to imagine pushing yourself down through the bench, away from the bar rather than pushing the bar up. This will give you a little more power.
9. Assistance exercises: doing these can help you overcome any weak points in your bench press. Some of these include: rack lockouts, seated half presses in the rack (for shoulders),

close-grip steep incline presses (for triceps), floor presses.

10. If you tend to lift one foot up off the floor when you bench when it gets difficult try putting a 2½-pound weight on your foot. Try not to let it move when you are benching. The weight won't keep your foot down, you must strive not to move it.
11. When you get under the bar, a trick you can use to stabilize and tighten your shoulder girdle is to rotate the bar. Here it is in detail. Lie down and grip the bar a little higher around towards the back than usual. Rotate your hands down without releasing the bar. The bar will spin down towards your feet. Your elbows will move towards your feet and your shoulders will tighten up (you should feel as though your shoulder girdle is moving down). This movement activates the serratus anterior muscles and the lats, which help anchor your shoulders during the movement. This slight movement will instantly increase your strength and stability. Combine this with keeping your shoulder blades pinched behind your back and puffing your chest out.
12. If you wish to develop explosiveness in your bench, try partner-assisted bench. Instead of spotting you, your partner should lean on the bar in order to add weight to it (enough so you can't move it). Your partner removes their weight suddenly at the point where you have a lot of tension built up so you explode the bar up. This type of training will engage a lot of motor units in order to try and move the resistance, then force them to explode all at once at the release. It's like revving an engine with the brakes on then releasing them and peeling out.
13. If you don't have a partner but wish to try the above technique, use a bench machine. Use a weight you can't move with one arm but can with two. Push as hard as you can with one arm then slam the other one and explode up. Repeat with the other arm. Another way is to use the spot pins on a bench press set up. Push the bar underneath them, developing tension against those, then slide the bar out from underneath them and explode up.
14. Try Complex Sets – precede explosive sets with a heavy set of doubles or triples. Rest 3 to 5 minutes then perform an explosive set with 60% or 1 RM for 3 to 5 reps. This uses type 2A fibers. It tricks your motor units into thinking you're using heavy weight with high velocity, increasing the number of motor units activated.

Variations:

1. Incline barbell bench - lie back on an incline bench (the inclines may vary from bench to bench - some are adjustable). Take a medium grip, a little narrower than on the flat bench. Lower the bar slowly to your upper chest (where your breastbone meets your clavicles). Do not set the bar too low as this will limit the amount of weight you will be able to lift. Press up. The same tricks apply. This exercise works the upper pecs. Some people with shoulder problems may find this exercise painful due to the larger range of motion. Be sure not to allow your butt to come out of the seat otherwise you will turn it into a flat bench. Puffing your chest out as you bring the bar down will give your pecs a little extra stretch.

One major thing you will notice with the incline is that you cannot move as much weight as on flat bench. This is due to the angle and leverage of the incline. Some benches allow you to change the incline. It is a good idea to do this.

Be careful about your grip. Too wide a grip on the incline barbell press will stress your shoulders too much. Experienced, strong trainers can handle this but beginners should not use a wide grip. High bar placement can also stress your shoulders. Also, beware of one arm higher benching.

The incline barbell bench has a different line of travel than the flat bench. The bar should touch very high on your chest where the breastbone meets the clavicles. The bar should travel in a perfectly vertical straight line, unlike the slight backward arc of the flat bench. This requires you to keep your elbows down and close to the body so they can stay under the wrists throughout the lift. The bar will travel very close to your face. At the start, you should nearly touch your chin. Most people do not do this exercise correctly and can increase the weight they use simply by using proper technique.

2. Decline barbell bench - lie down on a decline bench and take a medium grip. Lower the bar to your lower pecs then press up. Same tricks. Do not lift your head up and do not bridge or arch. This exercise works the lower pecs. You will be able to use more weight because the leverage is better due to the biomechanics of the movement. For some people, the barbell doesn't go below their usual sticking point. The greater the decline angle, the more weight you'll be able to use (to a point) due to the decreasing range of motion. Decline bench is a good way to condition your body to using heavier weight. If you really wish to get used to heavier weight, do partial bench press with the decline bench. This is where you will be able to use a great deal of weight and condition your connective tissue.
3. Smith Machine bench - set of a bench (flat, incline or decline) in a Smith machine and press like normal. The machine will limit your freedom of movement, allowing you to concentrate on the muscle and just pushing. The downside is, you will not develop your stabilizing muscles, hampering your strength and coordination in the long-term. This is not a good movement to base a program around due to this problem. It can also be stressful on your joints, pushing at an angle against a (somewhat) fixed bar.
4. Universal Machine presses - same execution as flat benches. Make sure the handles are in line with your middle to lower pecs at the bottom of the movement. Don't allow the weight stack to touch between reps. If possible, move the bench so you can hook your knees over the edge. This will keep you from sliding back towards the stack as you may have a tendency to do on a smooth bench. This happens because your arms push down towards your feet during the movement. Since the bar is anchored and your body is not, your body will move. The knee hook will prevent this.

The Universal bench is an effective machine for doing two-arms up, one-arm down negatives. When doing these, the arm that is not lowering should be hooked around the other side by bracing the forearm against the outside of the inner perpendicular bar. Pull in for even better stabilization. This keeps you from rolling over and keeps the other hand from helping too much. Be quick when you go from gripping with two hands to bracing the forearm. Your foot placement will be askew from normal because of the unbalanced forces involved.

The Universal bench can also be used for partials by lifting the handles then setting the pin with the handles raised up. If there isn't enough weight in that position, do them one armed. You may also want to try using the Universal at an incline for these. If you try using an incline bench, though, you will have to set the pin in the stack so high that the weight will be too light. To get around this, brace your back with something, e.g. pull the seat off the pec deck machine, set it under the handles, sit on the floor and go from there.

5. Seated bench machine - Same execution as flat benches. The selectorized stack is great for drop sets as the pin is right beside you. Unfortunately, most seated bench machines have a pivot point opposite to what is best. When the pivot point is below you, the arc is downward, not upward like what is desirable in a flat bench. This can be uncomfortable on the shoulders. Ideally, the pivot point should be overhead. Hammer Strength machines are built like this but use plate-loading, not weight stacks.

6. Floor bench press – This is an easy way to do partials without a power rack. Place a loaded barbell on the floor (45-pound plates will work best for this). Smaller plates will give you too much range of motion and your elbows will hit the floor before the weight does. Slide underneath it then press up from there. This is a good exercise if you don't have access to a good bench. To take this concept to the next level, try resting the plates on two platforms such as wooden blocks, other plates, etc. This will allow you to start the weight at an even higher position. It is also good if you have long arms and even 45-pound plates are not enough to prevent your elbows from hitting the floor. When executing, lie flat on your back with your knees bent or with your legs straight out. An advantage of lifting with your legs straight out is actually caused by a mechanical disadvantage. Your feet are off the floor, taking your legs completely out of the bench press movement. This forces your upper body to handle the entire load, unlike in a regular bench press. Not only that, it will also take away the balance and support your feet give you, forcing you to use your shoulders, arms and abdominals to keep from tipping over. This instability, combined with heavy loads, makes this exercise a great assistance exercise to the bench press.
7. Bench press to the neck – with this variation of the bench press, you lower the bar to the neck or upper sternum area. This is targeted to work the upper chest. This exercise can be stressful to your shoulders, however, so if you do have shoulder problems, avoid it. Use it sparingly otherwise. To increase the effect on the chest, turn your hands in so that your fingers are pointing towards each other and the bar runs through your index and third fingers. If you do that, use the Smith machine to prevent balance problems. Be very careful when doing this exercise. It's hard to train when you're dead.
8. One arm barbell bench – This is similar to regular bench press in that you are using the same bar on the same bench. The difference is that you will be using only one arm. Grip the bar in the very center. Balance is a big part of this exercise. It will build the stabilizing muscles of the forearms, shoulders and chest. Keep the center of the bar over the middle of your body as much as possible. The motion will be more similar to a close grip bench press. You may need to hold onto something with your free hand to keep from rolling over.

Here is another variation of the one arm barbell bench. Lie flat on the floor. Load a barbell equally on both sides. Push up on only one side at a time while holding the other side down with other hand. How close you place your hand to the moving side determines relative weight and range of motion due to leverage factors (the closer to the plates your hands are, the stronger you will be). The advantage of this type of press is the way the barbell moves. Instead of going straight up and down, the weight will move in arc over your chest, more closely simulating the action of the pectoralis muscle (pulling across). This is a major advantage.

The only reason you need to load the barbell equally is if you want to alternate hands. If you want, load the other side with smaller plates for greater range of motion. Switch your body around to work the other side.

Taking this one step further, it is possible to do two arm, one arm bench. Simply set up two barbells in the fashion described above and do both arms at the same time.

Another trick you can do with this is heavy partials. Simply set the end you're using on a platform or step to reduce the range of motion. This is ideal if you don't have a power rack but do have barbells. You can also do heavy negatives like this. Lift the weight slightly off the platform, lower it, slide out from under, deadlift the end back onto the platform and go again.

9. Partial bench press in the rack – these can be done anywhere in the range of motion of the

bench press to build specific strength in that range of motion. Doing them at the top with very heavy weight will build lockout power. Doing them off the bottom from a dead stop with no elastic tension in the muscle will build power off the bottom. They can also be done right at the sticking point in a static hold.

When doing these bottom start, set the pins to the lowest possible spot you can where the bar is just off your chest (with an expanded rib cage – this makes a few inches difference and is the position you should be in at the start of the push). To make these very hard, develop a little tension in the pecs, feel for the stretch then explode up. This will fire more muscle fibers by engaging the stretch reflex.

When you do presses at the top range, use extremely heavy weight. This is a perfect opportunity to build up the connective tissue. You can do these continuous or put the weight down after each rep. When doing bottom starts, use about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of your max. Start with a powerful push, go up to the sticking point, hold for a few seconds, then lower back down. Do an isometric push on the last one when you can't even budge the bar.

## 2. FLAT DUMBBELL BENCH

Take two dumbbells and lie down on a flat bench. The dumbbells should be at the bottom position similar to that of a barbell bench. Press the dumbbells up in an arc (start out wide with a good stretch then finish at the top with the dumbbells together). The dumbbells should start around your lower or middle pecs and finish over top of your face. This path of motion can be varied to hit different parts of the muscle, i.e. finish with the dumbbells over your lower chest or start higher up on your chest - go with what feels best to you.

### Comments:

Do not bang the dumbbells together. This takes the tension off the muscle and puts it all on the shoulder joints.

Dumbbells are good if you're training alone and don't have access to a spotter, that way you can just drop them if you get in trouble.

Do not arch your back or bridge with your neck.

Dumbbells allow for a greater pec stretch than barbells but be careful not to overdo it.

Dumbbells improve coordination and stabilizer muscles.

Make sure you keep your forearms vertical throughout the movement.

### Tricks:

1. Use a feather grip (explained in barbell press) when going for feel.
2. Keep the pinky side of your hand higher as you press the dumbbells up to keep the tension on the pecs.
3. The easiest way to get the dumbbells into position is to pick them up, hold them on end on your upper thighs, then lie down, pulling the dumbbells back and into the bottom position as you do so. You may want a spotter to give you some help to get them to the top position right after that. When you are using heavy dumbbells, squat down and pick up the dumbbells. Stand up with them, holding them on the front of your upper thighs. Sit down and rest them from there. Light dumbbells can be picked right up off the floor straight from the seated position. Don't neglect posture and body position when picking up dumbbells. Just because you haven't started the exercise yet doesn't mean you can't hurt yourself.

4. Another way to get the dumbbells into position is to position one yourself as above then get a spotter to hand you the other one at the top.
5. In order to get full rib cage expansion on the stretch, try doing these with only your upper back resting on the bench. Your hips will drop down and your lower torso will be angled down while your upper torso will be flat. To get into position, sit on the bench with the dumbbells on your upper thighs. Move your butt forward of the bench, dropping into a squat, and allow your back to rest on the bench. Thrust your hips up and throw your upper body back on to the bench, kicking the dumbbells into the bottom position of a dumbbell bench press then press up to the top position. If you are not completely in position with your entire lower back off the bench (the bottom of your rib cage should be in line with the end of the bench), weasel yourself down somewhat. Do the press from there and really try to expand the chest in the stretch position. When it gets hard, fight the urge to lift your hips up. Consciously force them down. This is good practice for keeping your butt down on the bench press.
6. At the bottom of the movement, turn your palms inward so they are facing each other and tuck your elbows in beside your body to get a bigger stretch and to hit the pecs differently.
7. Grasp the dumbbells unevenly, i.e. pinky touching the inner face of the outside plate. This keeps the tension on even better but can be difficult to balance.
8. If you're using moderate weight, try letting the dumbbells tip down so they are practically vertical. Your wrists will be cocked sideways (don't try this with heavy weights). As you press up to the top, push up with your thumb side. This will further activate the inner pecs.
9. Spotting under the elbows can cause accidents by tipping the dumbbells in. The wrists can be safer but more difficult to do. Try using lifting straps. The lifter will have the straps around their wrists with the tongue of the straps facing the inside of the forearm. The spotter should hold the straps lightly until failure, putting no tension on the straps. When the lifter hits failure, then start to lightly pull on the straps. This is a good technique for doing negatives with dumbbells. Lift hard on the way up then release the tension completely on the way down.
10. This is a technique that will activate the stretch reflex during a bench press set. Bring the dumbbells down in the normal style, going as far down as you can possible stretch. Your forearms should be vertical at this point. Let the dumbbells fall out to the sides as though bailing out on the exercise. Let them fall for only a few inches then contract the pecs hard and press up quickly. At the stretch, the dumbbells will be tilted down and away. As you come up, tilt them down and in with your pinkies higher. Squeeze your pecs hard at the top and repeat. Use a moderately heavy weight for this technique, as you want to be able to press them up from a very deep stretch. This will fire up your pecs like crazy. This technique can be used for dumbbell shoulder press as well.
11. When you reach a sticking point in the dumbbell press where you can't move the weight up anymore, try focusing on moving just one up a little bit while holding the other one in place. You may have to use your whole body to accomplish this by applying force with your legs and abs. When you've moved the one, focus on the other and move it up a little while holding the first one. Repeat this until you get past the sticking point. This works because you no longer have to divide the neural impulse between two limbs. You can add a little bit more to one side at a time to get past the sticking point. This usually works only on the last rep of a set (it will usually be your last rep after doing that trick). It is also a good way to gut out a last rep where previously you may not have been able to. This is called ratcheting.
12. When you start using really large dumbbells (over 100 pounds each) you may find that you can't bring them close enough together at the top of the movement because the end plates

hit each other. To get around this, simply rotate the dumbbells as you come to the top so your thumbs are towards your head. This does make it more difficult to keep tension on the pecs, however, so try to consciously maintain as much tension as possible.

Variations:

1. Incline dumbbell bench - same execution but using an incline bench. Lower the dumbbells to the upper chest then press up, keeping the pinkies higher. To maximally hit the upper pecs, set the incline bench to a steep incline (around 50 to 60 degrees). Face your palms together at the bottom position to get a better stretch. A trick to try is to angle your hands so that your pinkies are slightly back, almost as though you are trying to touch the backs of your hands together.

To get the dumbbells into position, you can balance them on your knees, then kick them up one at a time. You can also get someone to hand you one or if they're light, just pick them up and swing them up into position. Another technique that works well is very similar to the one explained for seated dumbbell shoulder press. Consult that exercise section for a detailed explanation. The only difference is the angle of your body and the distance it travels back.

Something you may want to try when doing these is to do them with your head and shoulders over the top edge of the bench. This will open up the chest and create a forced arch in your back. This will help with chest isolation. In order to do this, stand instead of sitting on the incline bench.

If you are able to adjust the incline on the bench you are using, a good trick you can use is to start your first set on a high incline. With each progressive set, lower the incline a notch. This will allow you to use the same weight for about the same number of reps due to improving leverage. It also has the advantage of hitting more aspects of the pec fan. This works well in conjunction with higher volume training such as lactic acid training. Instead of decreasing weight, decrease the incline.

2. Decline dumbbell bench - use a decline bench. Lower the dumbbells to the lower chest then press up.
3. Swiss Ball dumbbell bench – dumbbell bench on a Swiss Ball. See Swiss Ball Training section for more information.
4. Alternating dumbbell bench – this variation basically utilizes the same technique, the only difference being that you do one arm at a time. The arm that is not lifting can be held at the bottom in the stretch position (regular) or at the top (reverse alternating). This variation allows you to focus on one side of the body at a time. It also allows you to use more body English to help get the dumbbell up. You can go as far as rolling your body over to the side and pushing at angles with your feet. This version works well with the Swiss Ball.
5. One arm dumbbell bench – this is done on the incline or flat bench with only one dumbbell at a time. Don't go too heavy or you'll tip over. Plant your feet wider than normal. As you lower the dumbbell down, rotate your upper body in the opposite direction to counterbalance the weight. Press up. This uneven torque will greatly work your oblique muscles as well. As you press up rotate your upper body towards the dumbbell (roll over to meet it). This gives you greater tension at the top. Rotate the dumbbell at the top from pronated to neutral grip (palm facing in) for an extra squeeze. This variation works very well on the incline bench. This exercise works very well on the Swiss ball. You can roll over on the ball to help balance the off-center weight.

### 3. FLAT DUMBBELL FLYES

Lie down on a flat bench with two dumbbells. With a slight bend in your elbow, arms stiff and hands facing each other, lower the dumbbells wide out to the sides as if welcoming a hug. Puff your chest out to stretch the pecs. Go for a big stretch, but don't overextend to where it's uncomfortable for your shoulders. Squeeze back up to the starting position in a wide arc. Imagine yourself hugging a tree on the way up to fully activate the pecs. Maintain a constant bend in your elbows.

Comments:

Always lower the dumbbells slowly, as the shoulders are in a sensitive position in this exercise.  
Do not bounce heavily at the bottom.  
Do not bang the dumbbells together at the top.

Tricks:

1. At the top of the movement, rotate the dumbbells so that the pinkies turn inside towards the head, i.e. almost touch the bottom plates of the dumbbells together while moving the top plates apart.
2. At the bottom of the stretch, reverse the momentum with a twitch to activate the stretch reflex. The 1 1/4 rep works great like this. Lower the dumbbells, twitch at the bottom, bringing the dumbbells up only a quarter of the way. Lower, twitch then do a full rep up. Repeat, alternating 1/4 reps with full reps.
3. If this grip hurts your shoulders, try using a grip where your palms are facing your feet. Your thumbs will be coming together at the top. The shoulder is more stable in this position.
4. The end-of-bench trick (where only your back and shoulders are on the end of the bench) as explained in dumbbell press works very well for flyes as well.
5. The dumbbells should move back towards your ears as you are bringing them down. This provides a diagonal pull muscle, affecting more fibers.
6. A good way to teach the feel of this movement is to place a Swiss Ball on the person's chest and have them wrap their arms around it.
7. These can be done with a cradle grip using only your thumb and forefinger in a wide almost u-shaped loop. Keep the rest of your fingers off the handle. This can be useful on very high rep sets where your hands start to hurt and may limit your reps instead of your pecs.
8. These can also be done round-the-world style where you bring them down at about shoulder level then sweep the dumbbells down and around then bring them up by your lower abdomen almost like a scoop flye. This can also be done in the opposite direction as well. Be careful of your shoulders on this variation.
9. Flyes can be done alternating (hold one in the top position then lower and raise the other one) or reverse alternating (hold one in the stretch position then raise and lower the other one).
10. One of the faults of this exercise is the loss of resistance as you come to the top. If you have a partner, have them place their forearms on the inside your wrists as you come to the top.

They should resist your inward pressure by exerting outward pressure. This will keep resistance at the top. This same technique can be applied to other exercises where you lose tension at a certain spot, e.g. shoulder press, barbell curls, etc.

11. Instead of letting the dumbbells be cradled at an angle in your palms (as is the most natural position), hold them across the bottom knuckles of your palm, especially over the bottom pinky knuckle. This creates extra tension on the pecs. Try to think about exerting more pressure from the pinky side of the hand.

Variations:

1. Incline flies - same execution on an incline bench. This can be done on any angle. One of the most effective ways is to set the bench to about 60 degrees. Instead of having your palms facing each other, keep your palms facing forward (like in dumbbell bench) and bring them down and to the sides in a flye motion. While lowering the dumbbells, try to force the elbows to the back. Go for a maximal stretch, puffing the chest out as you go down.

Incline flies can also be done standing in order to get better rib cage expansion and therefore a greater effect on the upper chest. Use the same bench as you would use for seated flies only stand up so that your shoulder blades are across the top of the backrest. Arch your back over to open up your rib cage. This technique should be reserved for lighter weights, otherwise you may not be able to counterbalance the weight. You may wish to have a partner brace the bench so it doesn't slide back or you can place a weight on the front feet of the bench.

2. Decline flies - same execution as flat flies but on a decline bench.
3. Cable flies - place a bench (flat, incline or decline) in between two low pulleys (cross-over machine). Use two handles and execute the same motion. This version places tension on the pecs at the top of the motion as well as the stretch position. A good way to hit the upper chest while doing the flat bench version is, when you are at the contracted position, hold the contraction and raise your arms up over your face as if doing a front raise with the handles. Feel for the tension sweeping up your chest.
4. One arm cable flies - place a bench 90 degrees to a low pulley. Come up and across the chest with the handle. Make sure the bench is stable and you are stable on it. This version allow for a greater range of motion as you can go all the way across your body for a peak contraction of the pec. Any low pulley (even a seated row setup) can be used for this exercise. Experiment with angles of pull and lines of force to hit different areas of the chest. Starting low and coming up over your face will hit the upper chest while starting higher and pulling down across the abdomen will work lower chest. Another option is to use a palm-facing-in grip and push straight up to the ceiling like a one-arm bench press instead of coming across. A good technique you can use to hit the entire pec muscle is to hold the contraction at the top, then raise the cable up over your face to sweep the pec. Cradle the handle in your hand when using light weight to further isolate the pecs.

The one arm cable is a good way to do negative training. Do these cross bench. Hold the cable with your arm completely flexed, lying on your side in the contracted position. There is no tension on the muscle yet. Hold on with both hands then roll over to the other side, taking the cable with you. Hold on to the bench with your other hand to keep from rolling and do the negative from there.

5. Swiss ball flies – flies done on a Swiss ball. See Swiss Ball Training section for a more in depth description.

#### 4. CABLE CROSSOVERS

Stand between two high pulleys, gripping two handles. Your arms should be out and up like you're being crucified. Keeping a constant bend in the elbow (be careful not to bend them too much – about 10 to 20 degrees is plenty), bring your hands together in front of you, squeezing the pecs hard. Pretend like you are trying to hug a tree on the way down then try to cross your hands in front of you. Control the weight on the way back to the starting position. It is not necessary to go back to the original, straight arm starting position, but you can if you want. If not, then just allow your arms to go back without unlocking your elbows. Going back the starting position necessitates a shoulder socket roll while the shoulders are in a vulnerable position. If you have bad shoulders or don't want bad shoulders, don't do it.

Tricks:

1. To work the pecs differently, cross over higher or lower in front of you, i.e. by your thighs or out in front of your face, etc.
2. When using heavy weight, pull one side down (help with the other hand) and in and hold it in front of you close to your body. Keep that hand pinned to your body then go over to the other handle and get the other one into place. Start with your weak side on this trick so you can use your other hand to help. This trick is especially useful when doing static contraction training or partial reps.
3. If you tend to use excessive body movement when doing this exercise, lie face down on an incline bench and execute from there.
4. Cable crossovers can be used to hit the stretch position of the pec as well using a stretch-twitch movement. When your arms are at the top position, drop your upper body down quickly, leaving your arms back. Get a quick stretch then twitch your arms down, contracting hard.
5. To isolate your pecs, drop your shoulder girdle down and forward.
6. To vary the effects of cable crossovers, use varying body position and tracking, try reverse alternating or alternating, you may even try turning your body one way to get an uneven pull (be sure to balance it by turning back the other way as well).
7. Try moving your body around in relation to the pulleys, e.g. step forward, step back, to the sides, etc. to vary the resistance on your pecs and keep them guessing. This can be done with every rep. It will look as though you are walking around while doing the exercise (which you are).

Variations:

1. Upper chest crossovers - to work the upper pecs, use a low pulley and cross over up to the shoulder level, almost like a front delt raise but concentrating on the pec, standing or kneeling between the stack. Keep your arms stiff the entire time. This can also be done one arm at a time. Ensure that the arm does not bend. Up and across is the key to this movement.
2. High pulley upper chest crossovers – do these standing, bent over at the waist 90 degrees. Your shoulders should be in direct line between the pulleys. As you do the crossover movement, bring your hands way out in front a little under the level of your head and away

from your body. Keep your back arched and your chest puffed out and come around and forward. Internally rotate your shoulders so your knuckles are coming together at the point of contact. This one requires practice to develop a feel for. When using lighter weight, let the cable handle rest only in crotch of your hand (between the thumb and forefinger). These can be very effective when done alternating. Hold one in the contracted position then bring the other one out a little then around in front of the other like that hand game where you put one hand on top of the other and slide the bottom one out. Use a very short range of motion to keep the tension high.

3. One-arm crossovers - same execution as regular crossovers but do one arm at a time. This allows for greater tension on one pec and the range of motion is greater.
4. Ring crossovers - using parallel rings like gymnast's use, start with your hands together. Lower you upper body and flare your hands out wide like in flies. Squeeze back up to the starting position. This is an unorthodox movement and very few gyms will have the equipment for it. See what you can improvise.
5. Low pulley kneeling upper chest crossovers – kneel down between two low pulleys. Lean back somewhat (not too far, though). With your palms facing in and your back arched, bring your hands together high over your chin. Puff your chest out and squeeze. You can cross your hands over at the top. This is a very similar to the motion done on the incline bench but allows you more freedom of movement. This hits the extreme upper chest cleavage. There is no tension at the start but a lot at the contraction.
6. Low pulley kneeling lower chest crossovers – this has the same set-up as the previous exercise, the only difference being you cross over low in and in front of your body rather than overhead. You may also wish to move a little forward from between the pulleys to get more stretch. If the pulley height is adjustable on your machine, you can set the pulleys to shoulder level and come out in front like a flat bench crossover.
7. Facedown bench crossovers – these can be done facedown on a flat bench or an incline bench. This will eliminate any excessive body movement you may use. The execution is the same.
8. Crossover pushups – set a flat bench between the two pulleys perpendicular to them. Use a lot of weight (not more than you can get down into the bottom position though). Your knees should be just off the end of the bench. Bring down both handles then rest on your fists on the bench end. Drop down so your chest is on the bench and your hands are directly underneath. Let the handles raise up to about the stretch position of a bench press. As you bring the handles down again, if the weight is right, your upper body and thighs should rise up off the bench (try to push up with the chest). Keep your body stiff and straight you bring the handles down. As you push your body up, you will come to a point where your body will drop back down. Repeat. This will give you a major contraction in your pecs. You can make these harder by either increasing the weight and/or pivoting from lower on your legs.

This exercise is very similar to ring push-ups but you are not moving your entire bodyweight. It also works well as a static contraction hold. All the factors of instability and moving your body add up to an intense pec exercise. Even if you get stuck and can't bring the cables together at the bottom, you can rise up in a push-up then drop down and allow your bodyweight to finish the rep.

9. Scoop crossovers – use the low pulleys for this. It can be done standing, kneeling or leaning forward on an incline bench. Use an underhandish grip. Start low and wide, then scoop your hands up an in like your scooping an armload of something. Your pinkies should touch just

below chin level. Step forward a little from between the pulleys to get more of a stretch at the start.

10. Crossovers to pulldowns – do these on your knees. Lean forward and do a crossover then lean back and do a pulldown. Vary your grips on both. You can do a one to one ratio, two to two, or whatever.
11. Lower chest behind the back crossovers – start in the normal upright position, directly in between the cables. Lean over as though bringing the cables down in front of you. This time, lean over more than usual and bring the cables down behind your back. Do these for high reps with light weight. They will work the extreme lower pec line as well as a little biceps and back. Do these at the end of a chest workout.

## 5. DIPS

Set up in parallel or V-dipping bars, gripping so that your palms are facing each other. Lower yourself down slowly, flaring your elbows out to the sides and hunching your upper body over so that you form a half-moon. Squeeze up.

Comments:

If you've ever separated your shoulder, this exercise can be painful in the lockout position. If so, don't do dips or don't lockout.

Never drop yourself quickly when doing dips. This can put excessive strain on your shoulders. You should always employ a controlled descent.

Tricks:

1. Turn your hands around so that your knuckles are facing each other. Your pinkies will be forward and your thumbs will be back. It is not the most comfortable of positions and not very natural for your shoulders but is effective for the pecs. If that hurts too much, try only turning your hands halfway, so that your fingers are pointed forward and the bars are between the second and third fingers of your hands.
2. For extra resistance, use a dumbbell between the feet or a hip belt.
3. To work your abs as well, raise your feet up so they are parallel to the ground and hold them there while dipping.
4. Try to pull your hands together rather than pushing up, as this is the function of the pecs.

Variations:

1. Machine dips - same execution (hunch over, flare elbows out).
2. Bench machine handlebar dips - if you don't have access to a regular dipping station, set the handles on a bench machine as high as they will go by pulling it up as high as possible with no pin in then sticking the pin in the second plate hole. Dip in between the handles, same execution. If you are just starting and can't do many dips there is a good trick you can use with the bench machine handlebar dips. Put your feet on a bench a few feet in front of you. Keep your legs straight, hunch over, elbows wide. Not only will this make them easier, it will force your body into the dipping position where the pecs are being worked more.

## 6. PULLOVERS

These can be done lying across a bench (perpendicular), or along a bench, with a barbell or with a dumbbell. Holding the barbell or dumbbell above your face at arms length, lower it back behind your head, keeping your arms slightly bent but stiff. Stretch but not so much that your overstretch the shoulder capsule. Bring the barbell or dumbbell back up to the starting position.

Comments:

This exercise is potentially damaging to the shoulders if you allow the shoulder to stretch too much at the bottom of the movement.

This exercise is not the best exercise for pecs, though they can be useful for defining the lower pec line.

Pullovers are often recommended for rib cage expansion. Though there is much anecdotal evidence to support this use, there is no scientific evidence that this can be done.

Variations:

1. Dumbbell pullovers – these are better done cross-bench style because of the better stretch you can put on the rib cage without overstretching your shoulders, though they can also be done lengthwise along a bench or on a Swiss Ball. Don't grip the dumbbell, support it with your palms. If you are using very heavy weight, you can have a partner push down on your thighs to hold you down. Keep your shoulders square with the outside edge of the bench. Keep your feet flat and your arms slightly bent but stiff to take pressure off the elbows. Expand your rib cage at the stretch position, taking a very deep breath. Keep your hips below the level of the bench. Use your lats and serratus to brace against the resistance.

To increase the stretch on this exercise, drop your hips as low as possible when the dumbbell reaches the furthest point of the stretch. Bring your hips back up a split second before bringing it back up.

These can be done with two dumbbells, with one held in both hands or with only one held in one hand and done one arm at a time. Be careful not hit yourself in the back of the head with the dumbbell.

2. Barbell pullovers – these should be executed with your arms bent to take the pressure off the elbows. You can try an overhand or underhand grip. See which you feel more comfortable with and which one is best for your grip.
3. Cable pullovers – do these cross bench style. Set the bench in front of a low pulley. Use a single handle. The execution is the same as the dumbbell or barbell pullover. The major difference is that you still get tension on the chest all the way through the top of the movement. These are best done one arm at a time using the handle for a full range of motion. If you use the bar attachment, you will find that the cable hits you in the head halfway through the movement. Bring the cable straight down the middle but tilt your head to one side as it comes down. Switch the way you tilt your head with each rep to balance the effect. Vary the angles of pull to change how the exercise hits your chest. Try to push with the blade edge of your hand (pinky side) more. Hunch your shoulders forward as you pullover to involve the pectoralis minor muscle and get a bit more pec major contraction. Try to push the weight in as high an arc as possible. This brings the shoulders forward and forces the pecs to contract because it places the lats (which can also help with this movement) in an ineffectual stretch position.

Here are few more hints for this exercise. In the stretch position, increase the bend in your elbows to help spare your shoulders, then as you come up, straighten your elbows. This will also help increase the involvement of the long head of the triceps. When you are doing these one arm at a time you can angle your body to hit different aspects of the lower pecs. If you are using your right hand, angle your body so your feet are pointing to the left. Bring the handle over away from the body straight out to the right. This hits the outer / lower aspect of the pecs. To hit the inner / lower area, angle your body to right. Pull the handle in over your abdomen almost like a crossover.

This exercise can also be very effective using the rope attachment. When you are in the stretch position, spread your hands out wide, making an L with your arm. As you pull up and over squeeze your hands together. This will increase pec activation as the major function of the pecs is to bring your arms across the chest.

The easiest way to get into position on this exercise is as follows. Stand between the bench and the stack facing away from the stack. Grasp the handle with a curl grip. Step over the bench. Sit on the bench then rest on elbows then lie down on it and bring your arms into the pullover position. The alternatives are to get set then have someone hand the cable to you or to stretch back yourself and grasp the bar, rope or handle.

## 7. PEC-DECK MACHINE

Sit in the machine. There are several ways to position your arms. You can have them bent 90 degrees so that the inside of your forearms are on the pads or you can keep your arms straight and only contact the pads on the inside of your elbow. If you keep your forearms on the pads, remember to push with your elbow, not your hands. To execute, simply squeeze the pads together in front of you. This exercise places the most tension in the contracted position and is a reasonable finishing exercise.

Comments:

Do not hunch the shoulders forward as you execute as this can damage your shoulders. Keep them back throughout the movement.

The extreme externally rotated position of your shoulders when you use the machines with the vertical pads can harm your shoulders. If you have bad shoulders, do the straight arm version that looks like a flye movement.

If the extreme stretch position of this movement hurts your shoulders, only do the top half or quarter rep. That is where the good part of the exercise is anyway. It is actually never good to go for the stretch part of this exercise.

Tricks:

1. To hit the upper pecs hard, drop the seat to the bottom and angle your arms upward in a Y formation. To make it even better, use the straight arm technique in the Y formation, but rotate your shoulders around inwardly so that your pinkies are up and your thumbs are pointing down. Concentrate on the upper pecs when squeezing.
2. To hit the lower pecs, raise the seat high and angle your arms downward.
3. To get a greater range of motion, i.e. coming across further, do these one arm at a time. Brace the other arm on the other pad so you don't pull yourself out of the machine.
4. To do one arm negatives on the pec deck, use the non-working arm to help yank the working

one around and into the top position. Make sure your body is anchored into the machine as only having one arm on puts a lot of rotational force on your body.

Variations:

1. Inverse pec-deck flies - stand outside the machine, facing in. Grasp the outer edges of the pads with your hands. Pull them back towards you and squeeze them in and together. Move your body back as you do so. This straightens your arms and increases the contraction. These are good for static holds as well. To get into position, pull one side in to the halfway point, put your foot on the seat and brace the outside of the pad with your leg. Reach over and grab the other pad and pull it in. Grasp them both then proceed with the static hold. To work the mid-chest, stand with your upper body vertical. To work the upper chest more, step back a few feet and lean forward. To work the lower chest, step in closer and lean back. These can also be done for shoulders by bending over at 90 degrees and trying to push your upper body down as you squeeze.
2. Scoop style – set the seat as high as possible. Put your hands under the bottom ends of the pads with a reverse grip like the middle position of a barbell curl. Push in and around. Use a light weight for this one. Try to squeeze your shoulder blades together behind yourself at the start and keep your shoulders back during the movement. Attempt to scoop up with upward pressure during the movement to activate upper chest fibers.

## 8. PUSH-UPS

Lie face down on the floor. Put your hands out to the sides, elbows bent 90 degrees, fingers forward. Push up.

Comments:

This is a classic exercise that everyone knows how to do. It is a good place to start for beginners and is easy to learn.

There is no need to balance a bar.

Using your own bodyweight and moving your body actually produces more functional strength and muscle activation than bench press even though the movement is basically the same.

Variations:

1. Have someone sit on your back or put weight on it (e.g. weight plates).
2. Do them between benches for a greater range of motion. As well, there are stands you can buy for this purpose. The cheap way is to just use two dumbbells and push up on the handles. You have the option of using hexagonal ones that don't roll or using the standard round plate ones that do, forcing you to use more strength to keep them in place. If all you have are round ones, you can brace them with something (e.g. smaller plates like 5's or 10's) wedged against them.
3. Face your fingers slightly inward.
4. If you can't do push-ups on the floor, do them standing at an angle against a wall, or with your knees down. If you do them against a wall, you can make them harder by moving your feet away from the wall. These can also be done on tables, chairs, railings, etc. If you do them with your knees down, use your knees as a fulcrum or pivot point, i.e. your knees are locked and your feet come up as your torso goes down. It is also possible to keep your feet

on the floor and bend at the knees during the movement. To make these even easier, you can also bend at the waist.

5. Put your feet up on a bench to do incline push-ups. If it's too hard with your feet on the bench, try first with your thighs on the bench. As you get stronger, move yourself forward so the bench contacts lower on your legs. It is also possible to cross your legs and only have one foot or leg on the bench. This will decrease your stability and force you to work a little harder.
6. Do them on your fists for a greater range of motion and to isolate the pecs more. If you do these, try rotating your fist internally somewhat so that your knuckles are pointing towards each other. This will isolate your chest more.
7. To increase finger strength, do them on your fingertips. Work to doing them on your thumbs if you are really nuts.
8. To improve explosive strength, try clapping your hands together in between reps. This is a plyometric push up. Another plyometric variation is the drop push up. Start on your knees, fall down into the push up position then explode up. These can also be done standing as you become more advanced.
9. To use extra resistance, try using the Smith machine. You will be putting your body underneath the bar and pushing up against it. Use padding if you like, preferably the type that rolls. Set the guards so that the bar hits at the lowest point of the push-up. The foam padding around it will help the bar roll across your back as you push up as it is not a linear movement. This can be done on the floor or between two benches. If you do it on the floor, be sure to allow yourself room to get out from underneath it. To do negatives, have someone stand over you, lift up the bar, you do a push-up, have them put the bar on your back then you lower down. This can also be done with a vertical leg press machine.
10. To hit the total fan of the pecs, try doing them as though trying to squirm under a fence. It is a wavelike movement. These are much harder. At the start your butt is up in the air, your arms straight. Keep this position as you come down, then, as your push up, drop your butt down and lead up with your head, arching your back as much as you can. This movement hits the entire pectoral fan. These can also be done on your fists for a greater range of motion.
11. As you come up, try to force your hands together as though clapping. This will increase the inward tension your pecs are trying to exert.
12. Try these with your feet on a Swiss ball. You will have to work harder to control your position. For even more instability, instead of placing your hands on the ground, set them on rolling dumbbells (if the plates are loose it will work even better). Another option is to use two balls such as volleyballs. This will build great hand strength as well.

#### 9. ROLL-OUTS

Set up two Olympic bars or dumbbells side by side so that they are pointing forward/backward. Grip them right in the middle. Allow the bars to roll out to the sides. Squeeze up and roll the bars back together. These can be hard on your shoulders.

#### 10. WIDE BETWEEN BENCH FLYE TWITCHES

Set two benches to the same height. The space between the benches should be slightly less than your wingspan. Place your hands flat on the benches with your body in between. Lower your upper body below the level of the benches, feel the stretch then come up with a forceful pec contraction. Keep your arms bent a lot. The range of motion is not large. Your feet can be on the floor or on a raised surface such as a bench, machine, dumbbell rack, chair, etc. Keeping your feet on the floor will hit more lower chest while feet at the same level will work the middle and feet higher will work more upper chest. To make these easier, you can do them on your knees. Do these deliberately with no momentum. The closer the benches, the more like push-ups these become. The wider the benches, the bigger the stretch. This is a good bodyweight stretch position movement and especially useful if you don't have access to dumbbells in order to work the pecs in the stretch position.

#### 11. ONE ARM LEANING CROSS-BODY DUMBBELL RAISES

This is a unique exercise that gives you a peak contraction for the upper chest and front delt tie-in area. Hold a dumbbell in your right hand down by your side. Grab a vertical support with your left hand. Move your feet under your left hand so your body is leaning to the right at an angle. With your right arm slightly bent but stiff, raise it up, in front of, and across your body like a standing flye combined with a front raise. Squeeze hard at the top. This is a similar feel to the upper chest cable raise and is good if you don't have access to a cable set-up. Internally rotate at the shoulder as you bring the dumbbell up to really hit the very top, inner fibers of the pec. Vary the angle of your lean to see which works the best for you. Focus hard on the pec doing most of the work, feeling your upper chest cramp up instead of raising with your front delts.

#### 12. SIDE LYING DUMBBELL FLYES

This is a peak contraction exercise for the entire pec. Lie on your side on a flat bench with the top half of your upper body hanging off the end of the bench. The end of the bench should be right up in your armpit so you don't fall off. If you are lying on right side hold a dumbbell in your right hand and let it hang down (it's fine if its touching the ground – the benefit of the exercise is at the top of the movement). Keeping your arm slightly bent and stiff, raise the dumbbell in a flye type motion in front, around and up until your upper arm is pressed right up against your chest and the dumbbell is straight up in the air. Squeeze hard at the top. This exercise will really hit the inner pec area. This is a great alternative if you don't have any cables to work with and you want to have a peak contraction movement.

#### 13. PRESS-FLYE DUMBBELL/CABLE HYBRIDS

With this exercise you will be doing a dumbbell press and a cable flye movement at the same time. Set up a flat bench as you would for cable flyes (halfway in between two low pulleys). Use fairly light weights for this exercise to start with until you get the hang of it. The set up of the dumbbells is very important in this exercise. For each dumbbell, use a cable with a hook on the end. Loop the cable around the handle and hook it onto itself. This fastens the cable to the handle without having to grasp both. When holding the dumbbells, grab them so the cable is on the pinky side.

Reach over and pick up the dumbbells one at a time. Sit on the bench and rest the dumbbells on your thighs. Lay back and maneuver the dumbbells into position. Do a flye / press. Try varying the way your palms face (down, each other, transition from one to the other, etc.) to see what works best for you. This combo gives you resistance in the stretch position, midrange and contracted position all at once. You get tension on the chest down and pulling out. Experiment with how

much weight you want to use in the dumbbells and how much you want on the cables. For example, heavy dumbbells and light cables will focus more on the midrange movement with some resistance in the stretch and contracted position, while heavier cables and light dumbbells will focus on the stretch and contracted positions with some midrange. Mix and match to see what works for you.

Tricks:

1. To blowtorch your pecs, force your ribcage into the proper arched, expanded position by doing these off the end of a bench. Only your upper back will be in contact with the bench. Your hips will be down and your back arched. This will work the upper chest quite well. Getting the weight into position can be tricky, though. Start by sitting on the end of the bench. Pick up the dumbbells one at a time and rest them on end on your upper thighs. Squat down in front of the bench so your back is in contact with the edge of the bench. At this point, throw your weight back quickly to lie down on the edge of the bench and thrust your hips up, shooting the dumbbells up into position. Position yourself comfortably by wiggling around.
2. To really focus on the upper chest, do the bench-end trick. Move the bench back two feet so that when you push up, you are pulling back as well. Press to over your chin. If you find this irritates your shoulders, move the bench back in line.
3. To really work the lower pecs, do the opposite of the bench end trick and hang your upper body over the end of the bench (head down) with your legs wrapped around the bench to keep you on it (or have someone hold your legs down). Hook your feet together underneath and hold on tight. The end of the bench should be right in your mid-back and your back should be arched to open your chest with your torso hanging down and over. Use lighter weights for this version. This is a very advanced exercise and you should be careful of your back and blood pressure.
4. A safer version to work the lower pecs is to simply move the bench forward out of the midline of the pulleys. You will lie flat on the bench and lift down and towards your feet. The angle of the cables will give down resistance to work the lower chest.
5. Instead of tying the cable directly onto the dumbbell, you can also grasp both a dumbbell and a cable handle. This allows you to drop the cable to do a drop set. Lean over and grab the handles one at a time. Hold the handles in your fingers. Lean over and grab the dumbbells in your palms and lift them up, setting them on your thighs. Adjust the handles and dumbbells to where they are comfortable.
6. If the handles are too big to fit in between the dumbbell plates, turn the handle diagonally and hold it the dumbbell handles with your thumb. The pinky side of the cable handle will be on the outside of the plate.
7. If you don't have access to a cable crossover setup, you can do these one arm at a time on a low pulley. You may wish to counterbalance yourself by holding another dumbbell in the other hand. This trick can be done with the shoulder press version as well.
8. Start the movement with the flye movement then, when you die on that, switch to the press movement.
9. These can be done alternating or reverse alternating style depending on where in the resistance you want to focus. If you want more stretch, hold one at the bottom while you press the other one. If you want more contraction, hold one at the top. This technique

applies to the shoulder press version as well.

10. Body rotation and stop motion can be used on this exercise on the last rep to finish it off. The resistance of the cables will help you hold one in place. It is like a stair-stepping movement. If you want to move the right one, hold the left one still, then roll your body forcefully to the left, forcing the right dumbbell up with it. Hold the right one there then roll to the right taking the left dumbbell up a little. Repeat until you get to the top. It is brutality.

#### 14. CHEST AND BACK CABLE PUSH/PULL

This exercise is done between two low pulleys. Face one and have your back to the other one. Do a one arm cable row with the cable you are facing and a one arm bench press with cable you have your back to. Do these at the same time. This will also work your abs because of the torque on your midsection. The reason for doing these is that they are antagonist muscle groups. Activating one at the same time as the contralateral produces an increase in neuromuscular drive. It can also serve as a transition exercise between chest and back bodypart workouts by warming up whichever one you're doing next.

#### 15. ARM BRACED FLYES

This is very similar in concept to the forearm braced chins for biceps. The idea is to fix your arm to something then rotate your body around it. Set this up exactly like for that exercise (see Biceps section) only lower down. Put your feet on a bench or keep them on the floor, depending on the angle you want to hit. On the floor will hit the upper chest area more. You will be on your side at the start, hanging down by one arm. Moving only at the shoulder, rotate your body up and in. For extra resistance, hold a dumbbell or a plate in your other hand.

### CHEST TRAINING NOTES

A note on rib cage expansion:

There is controversy over whether one can enlarge the rib cage through exercise. Many trainers swear they have done this and there is compelling evidence. The consensus is that this type of training is best done before the age of 25 when the rib cage is still somewhat pliable. Here are a few methods you may want to try.

Do a set of pullovers before every workout.

After doing a set of heavy squats, do a light set of stiff-arm dumbbell pullovers. These can be deep-breathing squats (20 reps, 3 deep breaths between each rep).

For stiff-arm pullovers, use a light dumbbell for 12-15 reps.

For bent-arm pullovers, use a barbell with your elbows bent 90 degrees.

Decline dumbbell pullovers/flyes combination sets.

Removing fat from the lower chest area:

Superset dumbbell pullovers with wide grip dips – 12 to 15 reps, 3 to 5 supersets. You may wish to go even higher on the reps.

Placing a rolled up towel under your lower back in a bench press or flye exercise will keep your back arched, keeping the rib cage expanded and preventing your back from flattening.

If you find your arms and shoulders always take over on the bench press and you can't get pec development, drop benches, presses and dips (any chest exercise that uses the triceps and shoulders) and focus on heavy isolation training for awhile.

With any chest exercise, it is beneficial to have your head against the bench so you can push back against it. The neck flexion help to activate the chest muscles. Using a bench that doesn't have anything for head support will reduce the amount of weight you can use. Lifting the head off the bench is a common error in beginners as well. They tend to lift it up as they lower the weight.



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