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Healthy ways to build muscle naturally

Reshaping one's body takes time and commitments, though shortcuts can be tempting when trying to get fit. The desire to see instant results can lead some people to make potentially dangerous mistakes in the name of looking good.

There are various ways to safely build natural muscle. Novices should always consult their physicians before beginning a fitness regimen. Patience must be part of the equation, as expecting overnight results but not seeing them may derail your fitness efforts or lead you down an unsafe path. The following are some safe ways to build muscle.



increased size of muscles. For example, when doing a squat, lowering into the squat would be the eccentric phase of the exercise. Increase weight resistance to make this eccentric phase even more effective.

Hit muscle groups more frequently. In the 2016 study, "Effects of Resistance Training Frequency on Measures of Muscle Hypertrophy," published in *Sports Medicine*, targeting various muscle groups twice a week, rather than once, helped maximize muscle growth.

Consider a full-body routine. Working the entire body several times a week also may help one make gains in muscle growth. University of Alabama researchers followed a group of men who had been lifting weights for several years. Those who performed a full-body routine three days a week for three months gained almost 10 pounds of muscle over that time.

Fatigue the muscles. Decrease rest periods between sets to encourage quick release in muscle-building hormones.

Have casein protein before bed. Data published in *Science Daily* in March 2019 found that pre-sleep protein intake increases muscle protein synthesis during overnight sleep in young adults. Lead author Dr. Tim Snijders of Maastricht University gave 44 healthy young men a 12-week lifting program. Half were also given a nightly, pre-sleep protein shake with about 30 grams of casein, while the others weren't. The protein-before-bed group gained significantly more muscle strength and size than those who had no protein before bed.

Muscle growth comes from frequent strength training, increasing caloric consumption, taxing muscles, and being consistent and patient with one's goals.

Boost training volume. According to Ava Fitzgerald, C.S.C.S., C.P.T., a sports performance coach with the Professional Athletic Performance Center in New York, one may need to increase the number of reps and sets, but at an intensity at between 50 and 75 percent of the person's 1RM (the maximum weight he or she can lift for one rep). For good muscle volume, she recommends three to six sets of 10 to 20 reps.

Increase caloric intake. Find the balance between eating enough to gain muscle and gaining too much and body fat percentage creeping up. This can take some trial and error. Try to eat more calories on training days, focusing on plenty of lean protein, whole grain carbohydrates and vegetables.

Zero in on the eccentric phase of movement. Research published in the *European Journal of Applied Physiology* found that eccentric workouts are better at triggering hypertrophy, or the