

Words From The Iron

Muscle Builder

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A Lifestyle Guide to get Your Dream Body

Table Of Contents

Pg. 2 - About the Trainer

Pg. 3 - Gaining Weight

Pg. 5 - Understanding Macronutrients

Pg. 8 Methods

Pg. 10 Body Part Focus

Pg. 10 Chest

Pg. 11 Back

Pg. 12 Shoulders

Pg. 13 Legs

Pg. 15 Arms

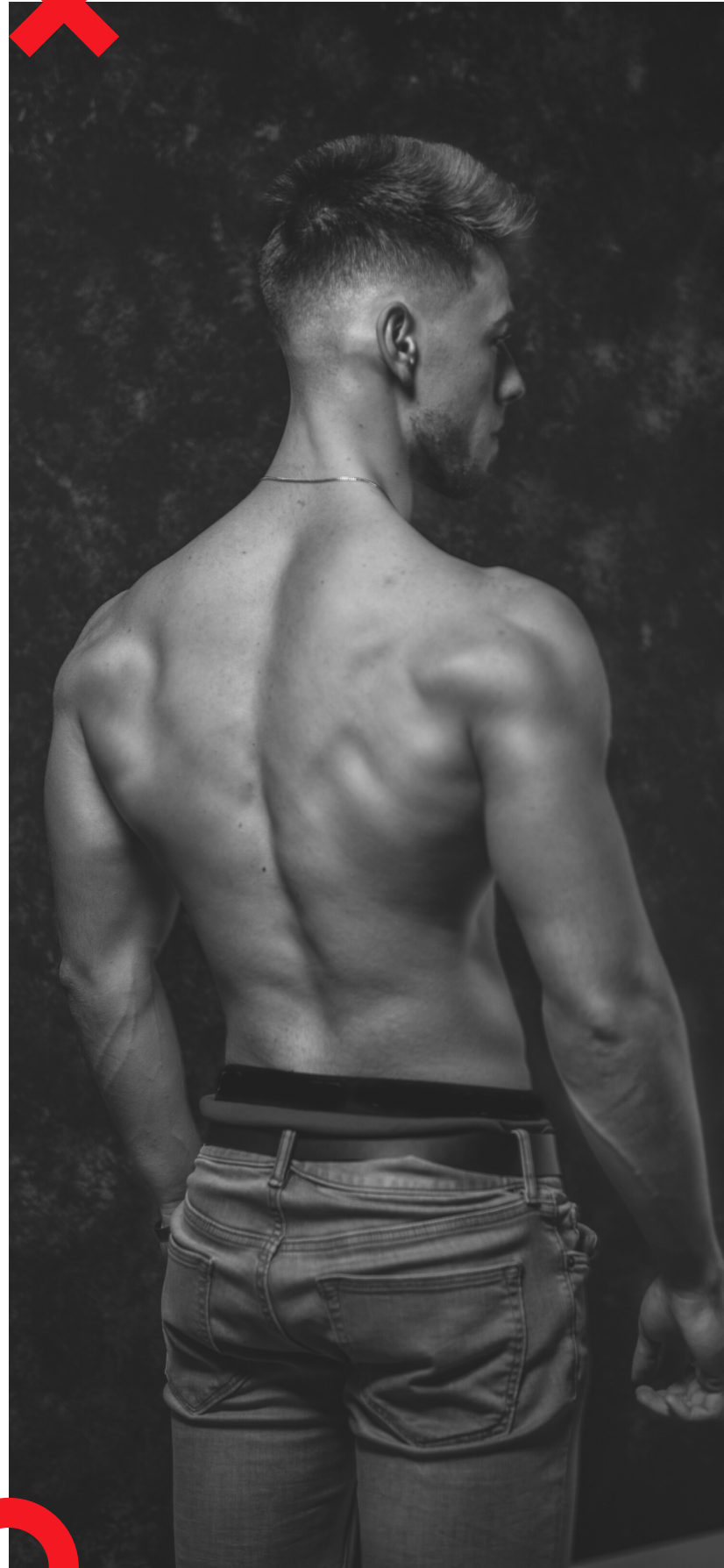
Pg. 17 Steroid Use

Pg. 18 Concluding Sentiment



About Your Trainer

Hey there! I'm Alex, your new trainer! And I'm here for one reason and one reason only: to help you get your DREAM body. I know what you're thinking. "I can't get my dream body, I'll never look like some of these instagram models." And that is where you are either dead wrong or so right. Let me break it down. I used to be skinny as hell. I never had much hope in getting to where I am now. I did not think this was attainable, but here I am. In 2016 I weighed 150lbs soaking wet, I'm writing this at 195lbs, and I'm still building. How was this possible? Simple, I put my head down and did the work I needed to do and didn't ask any questions about it. Building muscle is tough. It's NOT easy whatsoever, but it's worth it. That feeling when you start filling out your clothes the way they were meant. When your sleeves get tight around the biceps, or pants get tight around your quads, or when your booty starts to show through your jeans. These simple feelings saved my life and I'm proud to say that I've made it.



Gaining Weight

There are a lot of people who automatically attach the term “weight gain” with a negative, but that mindset needs to change right now. Simply gaining weight is by no means a negative. Muscle has weight. And in order to gain weight you need to be in a caloric surplus, whether your gaining muscle or gaining fat. So how do you control your weight gain to make sure you gain the right kind of weight rather than get fat?

Simple.

WORKOUT

That’s the simplest way of doing it.

FAT gain occurs when we go into a caloric surplus and then don’t use those extra calories so our body will store them in the form of fat.

MUSCLE gain occurs when we go into a caloric surplus and DO use those extra calories.

Okay real quick, what is a caloric surplus? A caloric surplus is when you eat more than your body’s minimum requirements for bodily functions. Most people fall into the 1300-2100 range for a MINIMUM amount of calories to eat. This number is called your basal metabolic rate (BMR). Everyone’s BMR will vary depending on your gender, age, height, weight, and genetics. You’re able to calculate it online with a “BMR calculator” or you can do your own calculation using the following formula:

$BMR \text{ (kcal / day)} = 10 * \text{weight (kg)} + 6.25 * \text{height (cm)} - 5 * \text{age (y)} + s$
(where s is +5 for males and -161 for females)

Using myself as an example:

$$\begin{aligned} BMR &= 10(88\text{kg}) + 6.25(183\text{cm}) - 5(22\text{y}) + 5 \\ &= 880 + 1143.75 - 110 + 5 \\ &= 1918.75\text{kcal/day} \end{aligned}$$

Gaining Weight

So my body would need approximately 1919 calories per day to simply survive. Now this is NOT 100% accurate, as it does not take into account genetics or muscle mass vs fat mass, however it's a good general base line.

BMR is the amount of calories you burn by just existing. If you decide to MOVE then you'll burn more, so if you're regularly active you must take this into account. This is why you see athletes often eating well over 3000 calories per day and sometimes still struggle to gain weight or even maintain.

So now you

have your BMR, add in the estimated amount you burn from daily activities (this can be done by counting your steps, and simply googling the amount of calories burned doing specific activities.) and BOOM now you know how much you need to eat in order to maintain your weight.

From here it's simple. Want to gain more weight? Eat more! But how much more? Great question!

3500 calories are equal to ~ 1lb of body weight.

The healthiest rate of weight gain is ~ 1lb/week. We also know that there are 7 days in a week. With this information we know that we need to be in a caloric surplus of 500cal/day in order to gain 1lb/week.

Understanding Macros

Ok so now we know how much we have to eat in order to gain muscle mass, but this does not mean we can just eat whatever we want in order to add up to those total calories. Let's start with understanding what a calorie even is. A calorie is a unit of measurement of energy, just joules. In fact, you can convert calories directly into joules by using the following equation:

$$1\text{kcal} = 4184\text{J}$$

So the calories in food is literally just how much energy there is in them to power our bodies. There are three macronutrients; fats, carbs, proteins. These three macronutrients (or macros) give us our calories.

1g of carbs has 4kcal

1g of protein has 4kcal

1g of fat has 9kcal.

Wow that's great, now what are you supposed to do with this information. Let's start with what each macro does for you. The most commonly understood one is protein. Protein serves to repair broken down tissue in the body, including muscle tissue. When we workout our muscle tissues tear apart, protein repairs these tissues in an adapted form. Our body will recognize that the way our muscles are currently constructed that they are not big and strong enough to be beat up like, so when the protein repairs the tissues it repairs them slightly bigger and stronger. So with this we can conclude that in terms of muscle growth that protein is the most important macro for us to keep track of.



Understanding Macros

You want to have at least 0.8g-1.8g/lb of body weight in order to gain muscle, I believe that more is usually better so I suggest keeping closer to 1.8g/lb of body weight. Generally, protein should be anywhere between 20%-40% of your total daily caloric intake (depending on your goals). The best/worst thing about protein is your body doesn't store excess, like it does with fat or carbs. This is good because it means you won't carry excess non-muscular weight, but it can stress your kidneys if you have way too much, so be careful to not overdo it. Carbs are used to help us with short term energy. They provide us with the energy and power to complete the first 2-3 minutes of exercise. Carbs are NECESSARY. They do not make you fat, they are not bad for you, there is NO reason to believe that avoiding carbs will make you a better person. The keto craze is ruining people's perception of food and what it actually does for you. Especially if you're trying to gain muscle you'll need all the calories you can get, and carbs are a very available source. The one type of carb to watch is sugar. Sugar should always be monitored, as if you have too much refined sugar it can obviously create health problems. Carbs have three forms; sugars, fibre, and starch. They all have their own purposes and if balanced correctly for YOU there should be no problem. Everyone is different and everyone will react differently. For example: some people are more gluten intolerant so when they have too many starched they're body will have an unpleasant reaction, some people it's just bloating, for others it could lead to an upset stomach. Not everyone is the same and just because your friend is intolerant to a type of food doesn't necessarily mean you should cut it out as well. Pay attention to the signs your own body sends you, no one else's. Fats often get a bad reputation because we gain fat. But eating fats and being fat are two totally different things. Fats are necessary for hormonal control, brain function,

Understanding Macros

organ protection, body heat, and long term energy (exercising for more than 3 minutes consecutively). Fats hold 9 calories/g, making them the most calorically dense macronutrient. This generally means that you should eat the less fat than carbs or protein. If you're a hard gainer and have a difficult time putting on muscle mass (such as myself) then you need all the calories you can get, as total caloric intake almost becomes more important than your macronutrient ratios. OF COURSE, it goes without saying that there are HEALTHY and UNHEALTHY fats, it's not hard to figure out which foods contain which. Here's a hint: if it's not a real food, it's probably not healthy fat.



Methods

All muscles are going to respond differently, as all muscles have different purposes. Some muscles respond better to increased load, heavy weight, others respond better to a slower movement, increased time under tension.

When certain body parts can be the sole driver of a compound movement they will usually see results when trained with an increased load. This means you need to put the weight all the way up and do low reps. When I talk about an increased load in terms of hypertrophy I am referring to 3-5 reps per set, with multiple warm up sets. When training like this it is important to have someone spotting you, as you want to hit absolute muscle failure. When I say muscle failure I am not referring to your muscles breaking apart, I'm just referring to the point in a workout where it feels as though you cannot do any more reps. When increasing the load on a muscle it is important to already have an understanding of your body. You should know roughly how many reps you'll be able to do with a certain weight, make sure you choose a weight that will allow you to hit failure. Going very heavy should only be done on compound exercises.

When we talk about that burning feeling in a muscle, when we talk about a muscle pump, when we talk about lactic acid build up, we normally refer to an increased time under tension. Time under tension can be done a couple of different ways, but the most important part is to control the movement as you lower the weight. The two most popular ways of increasing the time under tension in an exercise are the following: Increase the total number of reps, whether that's by adding more sets or adding more reps to each set, as long as the volume is increased. The other is by slowing down the movement, specifically on the negative phase. On the negative phase of every exercise, also known as the eccentric

Methods

contraction, is the part where your muscles feel that tension and really start to grow. This is why it is important to control the weight, both up and down, for every exercise, no matter the goal. Your muscles grow by literally tearing apart, if the weight is not controlled properly you can easily pull or completely tear a muscle or tendon. If your form is not correct then you can easily injure a joint or muscle.

Be safe and be smart. If you don't know how to do something in the gym, then don't do it until you're able to get a professional or a trusted friend to help you perfect your form. If you have certain imbalances, then that should be taken care of before you begin training for hypertrophy.



Body Part Focus

Chest

One of the most alpha body parts. Having a nice big chest will make you look bigger (obviously) but it will also make you look more confident, more proud, and you'll stand out more in a room. So how do we make it look nice? The chest is made up primarily of 2 muscles: Pectorals major and pectorals minor. The one that you can see is the pectoral major. You will see the word "pec" used interchangeably with pectoral major or minor. The purpose of the pecs is to perform a movement called shoulder adduction. This is the fancy name for "brings your elbows together." The best example of shoulder adduction is a pec fly. The most popular chest exercise is the bench press, whether it's with a barbell or dumbbells, whether it's on a flat bench, incline bench, or decline bench. This exercise, and its variations are the most popular mass builders for chest press.

So how do we make the most of our time training our pecs?

People's pecs respond best to either increased time under tension or increased recruitment. On compound chest movements most people prefer the increased recruitment method, as it's of course more fun, but it's not the best method for everyone. In order to know for sure, you'd have to play around with the different methods of hypertrophy to find out for sure. The majority of people, especially beginners, will respond better to an increased time under tension. In order to get maximal contraction from our pecs we need to make sure that we get a full stretch of the muscle, so this means our elbow come to at least 90° angle on presses, or to the point where your elbows are in line with your body on flies. To get a full contraction you need to focus on your elbows, not your hands. You're going to try and make your elbows touch. Obviously they never will actually touch, but

Body Part Focus

that's what needs to be your intention.

Back

The back is one of my favourite areas to train! There are so many variations to focus on different aspects. We're going to talk about two areas to improve: Thickness and width. Thickness of the back is improved by row movements; width is improved by pull down movements. When focusing on thickness the muscles we focus on are rhomboids, mid traps, lower traps, rear delts and some smaller muscles as well. The best technique for thickness is usually increased time under tension. Nice slow reps to really feel the stretch and contraction of each row.

In order to get maximal contraction out of rows you must really over exaggerate the stretch and squeeze the shoulder blades together on the contraction. Squeeze for a second before continuing into the negative phase of the movement for your next rep.

When focussing on width the muscle we focus on is your latissimus dorsi (lats). The lats are one of the most important muscles to create the illusion of a smaller waist, as it accentuates the V-taper that we all try to achieve. Lats usually get the best activation through pull downs, pull overs, or pull ups, but they still activate during rows as long as your elbows stay tight to your body.

To get maximal contraction out of your lats you must really exaggerate the stretch of the movement, whether it's a pull down or a row, and the contraction must finish with your elbows right by your side. Hold the contraction for a second. Again your body will respond best to an increased time under tension. With all back movements you should focus on the placement of your

Body Part Focus

elbows and shoulder blades rather than your hands. Pretend there is a string pulling your elbows back on rows, and down on pull downs.

Shoulders

The shoulders are an interesting muscle group because it is one muscle is split into three distinct heads: front delt, side or lateral delt, rear delt. We'll go over all of them. All though you can shift the focus from one head to the other you can never completely isolate one head.

The front delt can be targeted by any movement where your elbows move to the front of the body, or any press. One popular exercise is a front delt raise. When performing this exercise do yourself a favour and do not swing, I know too many people who have hurt themselves. My favourite front delt movement is overhead press (OHP). When performing OHP most people respond best to increased recruitment, but there are some people who respond better to increased time under tension.

Lateral delts are hit best when the elbows come up by your side. Keep your elbows above your hands and keep your palms facing the floor or behind you. Everyone's lateral delts will respond best to increased time under tension. Whether it's a slow tempo or increased reps; as long as you burn out.

Rear delts are best at work when your elbows are up high and pulled back, whether in the form of a wide row or a reverse fly. Rear delts will general respond best to an increased time under tension; whether it's a slow tempo or high reps.

Body Part Focus

Legs

And these are the big ones. Your legs make up the biggest area of your body that you will dedicate just one day to training. Your legs have four major focus areas: Quads, Hamstrings, Glutes, Calves.

We'll break them down one by one.

Glutes are the big one, literally. Your gluteus maximus is the biggest and strongest muscle in the human body. Because of this there is no reason for you to train this muscle lightly. Any movement where you move your hips forward and squeeze your

butt cheeks will activate it. The key is to really focus on squeezing your cheeks. No cash, only credit. Shut the door nice and tight. Pretend you have a hundred-dollar bill in between your cheeks. Movements such as deadlift variations and hip thrusts are usually the most popular, but squat variations will also work the glutes very well. Glutes respond well to increased recruitment. Unless you have an injury there is no reason to train your glutes lightly

Quads are the muscle group that we normally think of when we think of legs. Quads activate whenever you straighten your legs from a bent position. They respond to increased recruitment in compound exercises such as squats or also time under tension in single joint movements such as leg extensions. It should be



Body Part Focus

noted that leg extensions will not do a whole lot to directly build muscle. When wanting to target the quads you should make sure you focus on extending the knees and squeeze on exercises that do not have a direct load such as squats or leg press.

The hamstring works very similarly to the bicep. It flexes your leg at the knee, but also assists in hip hinging. The most important thing when it comes to growing the hamstring is to feel a stretch. In a hip hinge exercise, such as a Romanian deadlift, it is important to feel the stretch in the hamstring before engaging in the concentric contraction. The hamstring responds best to slow controlled movements. An increased time under tension will work best. This is one of the muscles where it is most important to engage the “mind to muscle connection”. You have to really focus on the muscle you want to hit. In the hamstring there are three separate muscles; Bicep femoris, semitendinosus and semimembranosus. The bicep femoris is more focused on the flexion of the knee and the two “semis” focus more on hip hinging. But just like most other muscle groups you can never only work one at a time, you can only shift the focus.

Everyone ignores calves and that’s simply because it is boring! A small muscle that most people usually don’t see or pay attention to and it always just feels as though it doesn’t grow. But let me tell you, it does grow! Just slowly. There are two primary muscles in the calf; Gastrocnemius and soleus. The gastrocnemius (gastroc) is the long muscle that is more visible. This muscle actually goes all the way up and crosses the knee. In order to get a full contraction of the gastroc you need to do standing calf raises. The soleus is located behind the gastroc. This muscle does not cross the knee, so in order to focus on the soleus you must do seated calf raises, although standing will hit it the same. People try making calves more exciting by loading up the weight and banging out

Body Part Focus

a ton of uncontrolled reps, but let me tell you, that's wrong. Calves respond best to time under tension. The tempo I find works best is 3-2-2-2. Three second eccentric, two second pause at the bottom, two second concentric, two second pause at the top.

Arms

If you don't love training arms, then you need to get yourself checked because arms rock! Through my many years of training I have discovered the perfect formula for growing perfectly shaped arms. In the arm there are two motions you have to train; elbow flexion and elbow extension. You might be wondering "Hey, coach, what about forearms?" To which my response would be; "Don't worry about it". Forearms are an accessory and let's keep it that way. They will grow and become stronger from the practical tasks you do every day. Gym forearm exercises are not practical. You will never do a wrist curl in real life, sorry to break it to you. Your forearms will get enough work with your upper arm exercises I promise. There are three movements to focus on in elbow extensions and 4 in elbow flexion so let's get to it.

Elbow flexion

When training elbow flexion most people think biceps. The answer is yes this is the best looking muscle that flexes your elbow, but not the strongest. The biceps brachii perform elbow flexion when your hands are in a supinated position. Bicep is Latin for two heads, so you can shift the focus. To focus on the short head, you need to perform your curls with your elbows in front of the body. To focus on the long head, you need to perform your curls with your elbows behind the body. The strongest flexor of the elbow is the brachialis. The brachialis can be targeted by performing curls with your hands in a neutral position. This muscle will give your arms a wider look, whereas the biceps focus on building the peak. And lastly there is

Body Part Focus

the brachioradialis. This muscle is targeted by performing curls with your hands in a pronated position. The muscle will also focus on giving your arms a wider look, as well as build the upper forearm.

Elbow extension

The triceps brachii are the only elbow extensor that we will be discussing. Tricep is a Latin word for “three heads”. There are three specific movements to focus on for the tricep. To focus on the short head, you need to keep your elbows downward on an tricep extension, to focus on the long head you need to keep your elbows up on a tricep extension. To focus on the medial head, you need to make sure you turn your hands outward on an extension. Think about keeping your knuckles away from your and pinkies out.

Arms are that simple because it's really only two movements, just with slight changes. When training arms you can never focus 100% on one muscle or one head, just shift the focus. Arms respond best to an increased time under tension.



Steroid Use

I feel as though steroid use has to be mentioned in this, as I bet a lot of you look at Instagram models or bodybuilders and think “wow I want to look like them”, but a lot of the time the reality is you can’t. I’m sorry to say but you need to keep your expectations in check. Any guy stepping on the Mr. Olympia stage is on gear. Probably over half of the Instagram models you see and aspire to look like are in gear. Everyone who is famous for the way their body looks is either on the sauce or a genetic freak, I’m sorry but you need to know how prevalent these drugs are in the fitness industry. With this information we’re going to break it down into the natty path and the juicer path.

Natty

You can build a terrific body. An astounding aesthetic. You can have an A1 physique. You can do all of this. But don’t think you’ll look like Ronnie Coleman, or Arnold. Using the tips above you can still create the perfect shape and maximize your genetics. You’ll need to work a little harder, but that’s good!

Juicer

You still need to work. You can’t just put a need in your ass and expect to grow. You need to do the right things; eat right, train hard, and maximize the path you chose. Think of steroids as the little mushroom in Mario Kart. It just makes you go faster, but you still have to drive and steer. If you’re choosing to use anabolic steroids, make sure you do your research, don’t be stupid, there are obvious side effects that can put your life in danger.

Concluding Sentiment

Although a Ronnie Coleman body may be out of the question, you can still maximize your genetic potential by following all the methods and techniques in this book. Start by figuring out how to do certain movements properly, then get used to tracking what you eat, then get to serious training. You can do this. You WILL do this. Let's get HUGE!

