



# TRICEPS WORKOUT GUIDE

**MUSCLE  
& FITNESS**

# TRICEPS

## BEGINNER

### TURNING YOUR TRICEPS INTO

well-defined horseshoes (the shape the muscle takes when developed) means moving some good old-fashioned heavy weight. First, though, you need to learn these key moves to lay a foundation.

➤➤ Don't let your hands touch together on the close-grip press — if your grip is too close you'll put unnecessary stress on your wrists.

➤➤ Stand straight up on the cable pressdown; don't lean forward to complete your reps.

## #66

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Close-Grip Bench Press	3	15, 12, 10
Machine Dip	2	10
Straight-Bar Cable Pressdown	2	10
Close-Grip Push-Up	1	8-10



### CLOSE-GRIP BENCH PRESS

**START:** Lie face-up on a flat bench and grasp the barbell with your hands 6–12 inches apart.

**MOVE:** Press the bar directly over your chest to just short of lockout. Lower the bar slowly, keeping your elbows as close to your sides as possible. At the bottom of the movement, your elbows should be a little lower than your shoulders. Keep the motion controlled, and don't overarch your back to get the bar up.

### MACHINE DIP

**START:** Grasp the handles with your palms facing your body. Keep your feet flat on the floor, and your glutes, back and shoulder blades pressed against the support pad.

**MOVE:** With your arms close to your sides throughout (elbows pointed straight back behind you), press the handles down to just short of lockout. Then slowly bring the handles back up so your elbows are at about chest level.





## STRAIGHT-BAR CABLE PRESSDOWN

**START:** With a slight bend in your knees, stand erect facing a high-cable pulley. Grasp a short straight bar with your hands placed 6–8 inches apart palms-down, and bend your elbows to 90 degrees.

**MOVE:** Keeping your elbows stationary near your sides, slowly straighten your arms. Pause at full extension and squeeze your triceps, then slowly return to the start position.



## CLOSE-GRIP PUSH-UP

**START:** Lie face down on the floor in a push-up position, placing your hands a few inches apart. Raise your body by extending your arms and coming up on your toes.

**MOVE:** With your forehead facing the floor and your abs pulled in, lower your body by bending your elbows. Stop the motion when your upper arms are about parallel to the floor, and reverse to the start. Avoid the tendency to lock out your elbows at the top and rest, instead keeping continuous tension on your triceps.



# TRICEPS

15-MINUTE

## CABLES ARE AN EXCELLENT TOOL

to carve out your triceps. They provide for multiple variations, three of which are outlined here.

➤➤ On triceps exercises such as the overhead rope extension, it's important you keep your upper arms from moving. Lock your arms into place at your shoulders, so the only action is taking place at your elbow. When you have movement at the shoulder joint, it means other muscles are kicking in to assist the triceps.

➤➤ In the compound set, it's best to use the D-handle cable attachment, so you can switch between the two exercises seamlessly.

# #67

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Overhead Rope Extension	4	15, 12, 10, 10*
Cable Concentration Extension (compound set with)	3	8, 10, 12**
Cable Kickback	3	8, 10, 12**
(Optional) Close-Grip Push-Up***	1	To failure

\* Pyramid the weight up each set.  
\*\* Pyramid the weight down each set.  
\*\*\* See exercise description on previous page.



## OVERHEAD ROPE EXTENSION

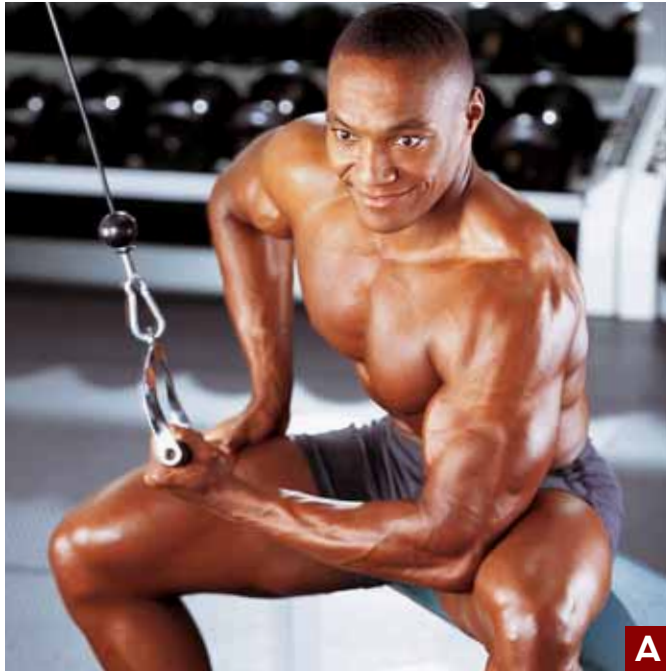
**START:** Attach a rope to the high-cable pulley. Grasp the rope just behind your head with a neutral grip and stand with your back to the weight stack, feet about 18 inches apart with one in front of the other for balance. Maintain a slight bend in your waist, holding your torso angled forward.

**MOVE:** Move only from the elbows as you press your arms to full extension, ending where your hands are about on the same plane as your ears.

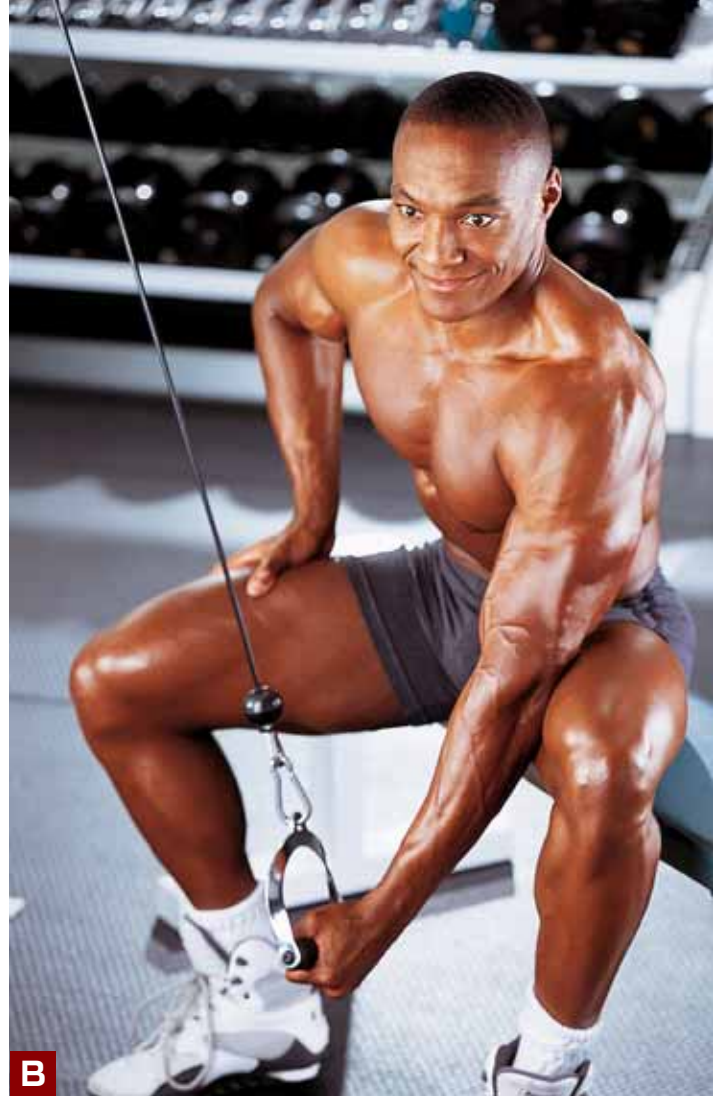
## CABLE CONCENTRATION EXTENSION

**START:** Attach a single-handle grip to the high pulley. Grasp the handle and sit on a flat bench, resting the back of your upper arm against the inside of your thigh (left arm, left thigh). Your elbow should be just below the level of your knee.

**MOVE:** Extend your arm fully, then hold the tension in your triceps as you slowly return to the start position. Reverse positions to work your opposite arm.



A



B



A



B

## CABLE KICKBACK

**START:** Face the weight stack, and bend from the waist so that your torso is about parallel to the floor. Grasp a D-handle attached to a low pulley (the D-handle is preferred because it makes for an easier transition in this particular compound set, although the no-handle variation is depicted in these photos). Raise your elbow so that your upper arm is parallel to the floor and your elbow is bent 90 degrees, tucked into your side.

**MOVE:** Extend your arm until your forearm and upper arm are aligned, squeeze at the point of peak contraction and release under control to the start.

# TRICEPS

## AT HOME

**YOU HAVE ALL KINDS OF BARBELL,** dumbbell and body weight variations of triceps exercises to choose from for use at home. Any of these particular three can be swapped for another non-machine move found in this chapter when you want to introduce a little variety. In the meantime, *tri* this one on for size.

➤➤ The close-grip dumbbell press is a perfect replacement for the barbell version when you don't have a spotter handy at home or in the gym.

➤➤ If you're up for the challenge, go for failure on all three bench-dip sets.

### #68

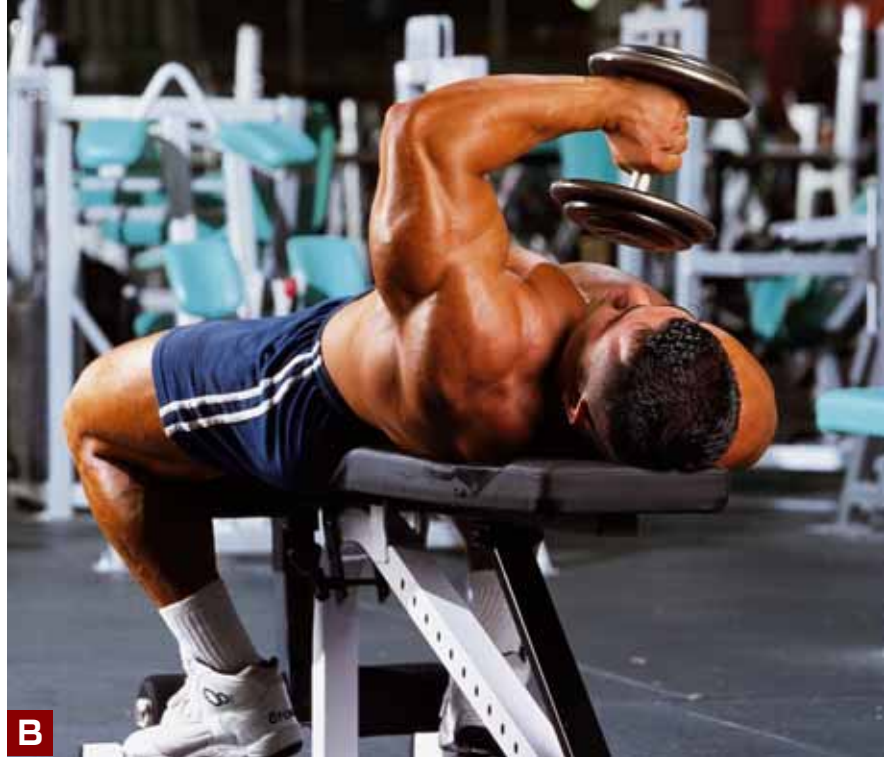
EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Close-Grip Dumbbell Press	4	12, 10, 8, 6
One-Arm Dumbbell Extension	3	10-12
Bench Dip	3	10



### CLOSE-GRIP DUMBBELL PRESS

**START:** Lie back on a flat bench, holding two dumbbells at your chest with a hammer-style (palms-facing) grip.

**MOVE:** Press the dumbbells straight overhead until your arms are straight, flexing your triceps to initiate and complete the move. Don't let the dumbbells come together at the top — keep a couple of inches between them all the way up and all the way down. Bring the weights back down toward your chest and repeat. If you'd like to work stabiliser muscles along with your tri's, attempt this move one arm at a time.



## ONE-ARM DUMBBELL EXTENSION

**START:** Lie on a flat bench and hold a dumbbell in one hand, palm facing down. Extend your elbow so the dumbbell is straight up toward the ceiling.

**MOVE:** Without letting your upper arm move (it should continue pointing straight up), bend at the elbow to bring the dumbbell down across your body toward the opposite side of your chest. Stop your downward motion when your elbow reaches 90 degrees — don't let the dumbbell touch down to your chest — and reverse to bring your arm back up into the start position.



## BENCH DIP

**START:** Get into dip position, placing your hands at the edge of a flat bench and straightening your elbows.

**MOVE:** Bend your elbows to drop your lower body below the level of the bench. Stop when your elbows reach 90 degrees (don't let your glutes touch down to the floor), then straighten your arms to return to the start.

### AWESOME AUSSIE LEE PRIEST IS

all about volume in his training. Known for doing 20 or more sets per bodypart (a strategy also employed by Arnold Schwarzenegger himself), Lee leaves no muscle fibre unturned in his session.

➡➡ “Because pressdowns are more of a shaping exercise for me, sometimes I do them first for a warm up, especially if I’m going heavy for the rest of my routine,” Lee says.

➡➡ Don’t train chest the day after a triceps workout — it’ll affect your pressing strength.

# #69

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Seated Overhead Dumbbell Extension	5	6–8
EZ-Bar Close-Grip Bench Press	5	6–8
Lying French Press	5	6–8
V-Bar Pressdown	5	6–8

Lee sometimes adds a fifth triceps exercise and reduces his sets per movement to four.



## SEATED OVERHEAD DUMBBELL EXTENSION

**START:** Sit on a low-back chair and hoist a dumbbell overhead, holding it with both hands, palms cupped against the upper inside plates.

**MOVE:** Using a slow, continuous motion, keeping your upper arms right beside your head, lower the dumbbell behind your head, then lift it back to full extension. “You pivot from the elbows,” he explains. “Don’t go too deep, or you’re going to irritate the tendons in your elbows.” At the bottom, Lee’s forearms are slightly above parallel to the floor.



## EZ-BAR CLOSE-GRIP BENCH PRESS (FEET UP)

**START:** “I normally use the EZ-bar here because it takes some of the strain off my wrists if I go heavy,” says Lee. “The straight bar tends to bend your wrists back more.” Lie back on a bench and grasp an EZ-bar on the inner curl.

**MOVE:** Press the weight up in a forceful motion, then come down so your hands just touch your chest. Although Lee has his feet up on the bench here and on the lying French press, he says that it’s generally a good idea to keep your feet on the floor for stability. “When I’m going light, I tend to put my feet up,” he notes. “When I’m going heavy, I keep my feet on the floor.”

## LYING FRENCH PRESS (FEET UP)

**START:** Lie face-up on a flat bench, holding an EZ-bar at arms' length above you.

**MOVE:** Keeping your upper arms as still as possible and hinging just at the elbows, bring the bar down to your forehead, then push it straight back up. Lee will sometimes superset this movement with a set of 6–8 reps of close-grip bench presses with the same bar “to really flush the muscle and pump as much blood into it as possible.”

A



B



## V-BAR PRESSDOWN

**START:** Attach a V-bar to an upper pulley and grasp it overhand, forearms parallel with the floor.

**MOVE:** Press downward forcefully by flexing your triceps, bringing the bar toward your thighs. At the bottom, squeeze for a second for a strong contraction.



A



B

### THREE-TIME WHEELCHAIR

Nationals champ Victor Konovalov hasn't let an unfortunate dirt-bike accident at age 19 derail his will. This top-level body-builder built an incredible upper body with some basic and slightly modified moves.

➡➡ "Before you initiate a rep, visualise yourself going through it," Victor says. "When you get tired, it's easy to lose your focus and intensity. Visualisation helps me ensure that every rep is the same."

➡➡ He also believes in trying numerous angles in your workout. "Each new angle targets the muscle somewhat differently."

## #70

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
One-Arm Pressdown	3-4	6-8*
Incline Overhead Dual Dumbbell Extension	3-4	6-8*
Incline Overhead EZ-Bar Extension	3-4	6-8*

\* Victor alternates this rep range with weeks when he uses lighter weights for sets of 10 to 15 reps, which he feels helps develop muscle tone. He also supersetts his triceps with his biceps workout on occasion.



"I use a moderate rep speed," Victor says. "Sometimes I close my eyes and try to feel the muscle fibres squeezing."

### ONE-ARM PRESSDOWN

**START:** Position yourself close to the weight stack and grasp a D-handle attached to a high pulley using an overhand grip. Use your free hand to grasp the frame of the machine for balance.

**MOVE:** Bring your working elbow in to your side and bend it 90 degrees to start. "When I'm pronated (palm down), I tend to feel it in the lateral, or outside, head more," says Victor. "As I press down, I push more through my index finger and thumb, which pronates my wrist even more." When your arm is at full extension at the bottom of the rep, allow the handle to come back up slowly.



A

## INCLINE OVERHEAD DUAL DUMBBELL EXTENSION

**START:** Recline on an incline bench and raise two dumbbells overhead, palms facing the ceiling.

**MOVE:** Bend your elbows to begin slowly lowering the weights until they're behind your head. Get a nice, deep stretch at the bottom, supinate your wrists so that your palms face each other, and then push the weights back up to full extension, turning your wrists so they face upward once you reach the top position in preparation for the next rep. If he senses an imbalance developing between his triceps, Victor performs this exercise one arm at a time instead.



B

## INCLINE OVERHEAD EZ-BAR EXTENSION

**START:** This exercise closely resembles the dumbbell extension, but Victor finds that using the EZ-bar allows him to go heavier. Grasp an EZ-bar at the inner curve of the bar and lower it behind your head.

**MOVE:** Extend your elbows and drive the bar up to full lockout. "With the dumbbell version, you're forced to use a lot of stabiliser muscles," Victor notes. "It's easier to focus on just pushing weight with the EZ-bar, and it's easier to control."



# TRICEPS

## DARREM'S WORKOUT

### TRINIDAD'S DARREM CHARLES

has to work his triceps hard to keep them in balance with his softball-sized biceps. This routine helps him do just that — and it can do wonders for your arms as well.

➤➤ A typical triceps workout shouldn't take longer than 30 minutes, according to Darrem. "Hit your tri's hard, then give them rest," he says.

➤➤ He also uses partials at the end of his workout occasionally. "For instance, on pressdowns, do 10 full reps, then pump out some one-quarter reps until your tri's are absolutely burning."

# #71

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Rope Pressdown	4	12, 10, 8, 6
Lying French Press	4	12, 10, 8, 6
Dumbbell Kickback	3-4	To failure



### ROPE PRESSDOWN

**START:** Attach a rope handle to an upper pulley and stand upright, grasping one end of the rope firmly in each hand.

**MOVE:** With your back tight in its natural arch and your elbows close to your sides, flex your elbows and bring the rope down to full extension. "To get maximum results out of each set, try holding your arms at the bottom of the movement in the straight and locked position for a full two seconds," Darrem suggests. "It's not easy, but it's the difference between simply performing a rep and making every rep count."



## LYING EZ-BAR FRENCH PRESS (FEET ON FLOOR)

**START:** "Use a flat bench and an EZ-bar; have a training partner hand you the weight," Darrem says. "Find a hand position that's most comfortable within shoulder-width distance." Lift the bar almost straight overhead, so your arms are just slightly angled back.

**MOVE:** Lower the bar from the overhead position down toward the upper part of your forehead — only your forearms should be moving, while your shoulders and upper arms remain stationary. Control is crucial on this move; if you don't have a spotter and you suddenly reach muscle failure, you can bail by leaving yourself enough bench room above your head (not shown in these photos) to set the bar down. You can also try this on a decline bench.



## DUMBBELL KICKBACK

**START:** Grasp a dumbbell and straddle a flat bench. Take a stable position so you can't swing the weight up, and hold your working arm adjacent to your body.

**MOVE:** Extend at your elbow until your arm is straight back, then reverse to the start. "Control the motion to ensure that your triceps do all the work, and take each set to failure," Darrem says. "Once the muscle begins to fatigue, I'll continue with partial reps — I don't stop until the muscle is completely depleted of strength and my triceps are on fire."



PER BERNAL

# TRICEPS

## SPECIALISED ROUTINES

### MORE WORKOUTS TO TRY:

**#72)** More mass. 'Nuff said.

**#73)** This routine employs the forced reps technique to pound your triceps. In a forced rep, a partner gives you just enough assistance to help you finish a rep when you can't complete any more on your own. For the cable pressdown, your partner should grasp the cable just above the handle and pull downward to help you.

**#74)** If you want more than just muscles for show, go for this power-packed workout. Try to move as much weight as you can in the smith-machine close-grip bench press, pyramiding up each set and continually striving to lift more weight from week to week.

**#75)** So your triceps won't grow no matter what you've tried? This'll whip 'em into shape.

**#76)** If you have plenty of arm mass, but you don't have the cuts and striations to go with it, this high-definition routine will etch in the detail you're seeking.

**#77)** A circuit workout will get your blood pumping — and even more importantly, get blood pumping into your muscles, prompting all the essential growth processes.

**#78)** When time is of the essence, this triceps routine will come in handy.

## #72 MASS BUILDER

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Close-Grip Dumbbell Press	4	12, 10, 8, 6
Lying EZ-Bar French Press	3	10, 8, 8
Seated Overhead Dumbbell Extension	3	10
Weighted Dip*	2	To failure

\* Similar to the version on **AT HOME**, except you put your feet up on a bench. Place a weight plate on your lap, and when you reach failure, drop the plate and continue repping until failure again.

## #73 "FORCED" GROWTH

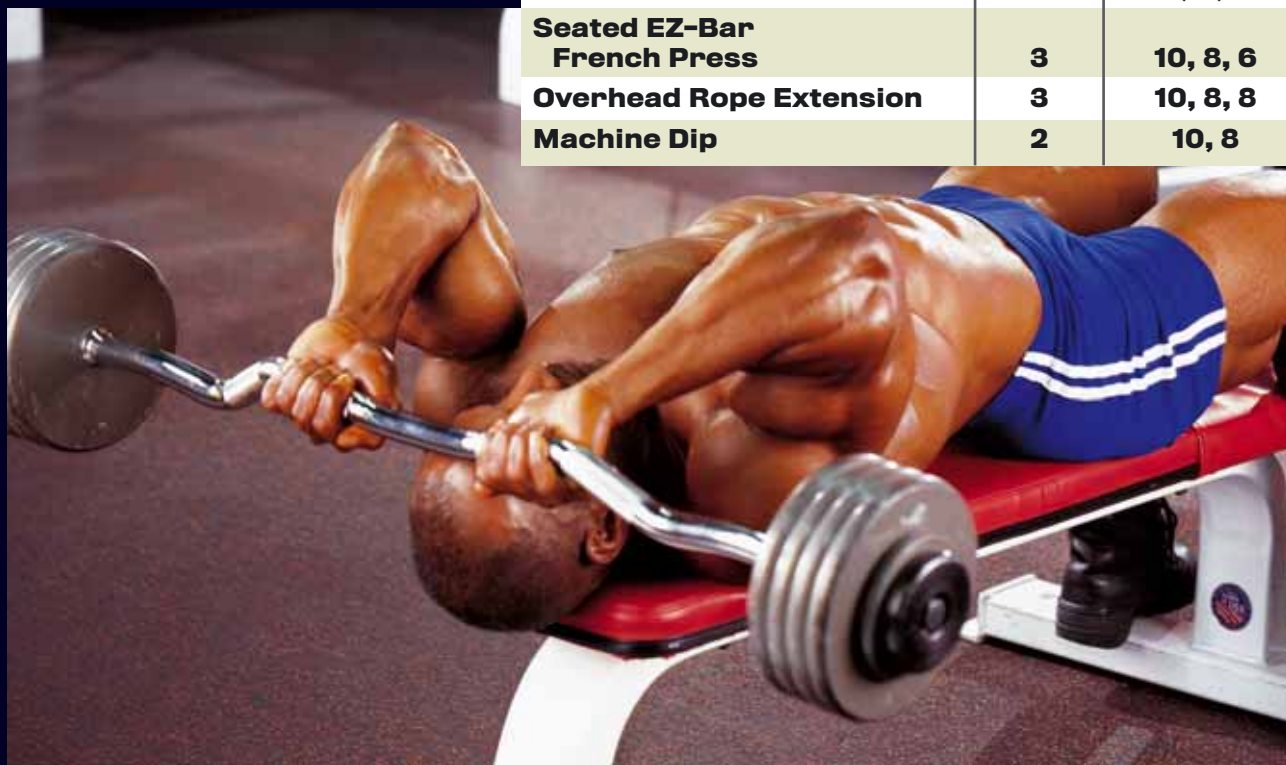
EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Close-Grip Bench Press*	4	15, 10, 8, 8
Cable Pressdown*	3	8-10
Dual Dumbbell Kickback†	3	10

\* Have a partner help you through 2 to 3 forced reps on the last two sets.

† Stand and bend at the hips while keeping your back arched, and complete a kickback with both arms simultaneously.

## #74 POWER & STRENGTH

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Close-Grip Smith-Machine Press	5	12, 10, 8, 5, 3
Seated EZ-Bar French Press	3	10, 8, 6
Overhead Rope Extension	3	10, 8, 8
Machine Dip	2	10, 8



## #75 SHOCK ROUTINE

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Decline French Press	4	15, 10, 8, 6
Standing Overhead Rope Extension*	4	6, 8, 10, 12
Parallel-Bar Dip (compound set with) Close-Grip Push-Up	3	10
	3	To failure

\* Similar to an overhead Dumbbell extension; stand with your back to a cable weight stack and grasp a rope handle with both hands. Extend your arms straight up toward the ceiling on each rep.

## #76 HIGH DEFINITION

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
½-Rep Close-Grip Bench Press	4*	25-30
V-Bar Pressdown	3	20, 15, 15
Reverse-Grip Pressdown**	3	20, 15, 15
Cable Concentration Extension	3	15†

\* Pulse reps — only do the bottom half of each rep. \*\* Same as cable pressdown but hold the bar underhanded. † Per arm.

## #77 FOUR-MOVE CIRCUIT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Reverse Close-Grip Bench Press*	4	12, 10, 8, 8
Lying EZ-Bar French Press	4	12, 10, 8, 8
Incline Overhead Dual Dumbbell Extension	4	12, 10, 8, 8
Close-Grip Push-Up†	4	10

\* Use a shoulder-width, underhand grip on bar.

† Perform with hands on a flat bench and feet on floor.

## #78 5-MINUTE

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Tri-Set:		
Standing EZ-Bar French Press	2	12, 10
Triceps Extension Machine*	2	12, 10
Parallel-Bar Dip	2	12, 10

Perform as a tri-set, back-to-back-to-back with no rest in-between; rest 30 to 60 seconds between tri-sets. Pyramid up the weight each set. \* Found at most gyms.