

The 15 Minute Equipment-Free Muscle-Building Workout

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My wife and I once went on a two week vacation, and as president of Sierra Exercise Equipment, LLC, I, of course, had packed my Sierra Gym. I got in some good morning workouts at places we stayed for a few days, but while traveling, we had to get up and get moving in the mornings, and there just wasn't enough time to set things up, so I did what I could in what little time I had – some bodyweight and self resistance exercises.

Thinking back on this, I decided to, once and for all, come up with a complete workout that would hit all muscle groups, that could be completed in a short period of time, and that would require no equipment.

I elected not to include self-resistance exercises, aside from a few isometrics, but instead used exercises that employ external resistance, or bodyweight, thus ensuring bona fide, muscle-building exercises.

Perform each of the following exercises once in the succession specified in the routine, following the instructions provided with each exercise. For each exercise, perform as many repetitions as you are able to, until your muscles are pumped and fatigued.

A few of the exercises require the use of a door and door knobs. Check to make sure that whatever door is used is solid, is firmly attached, and that the door knobs are securely attached.

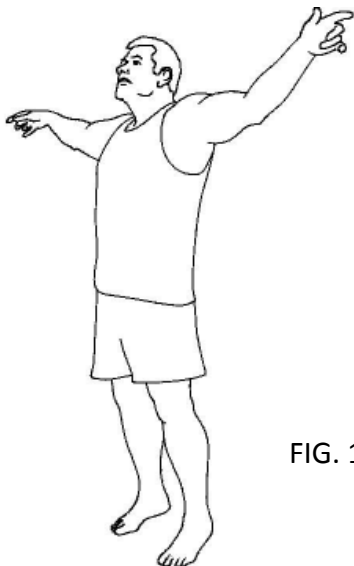


FIG. 1

Before beginning the exercises, do some deep breathing (FIG. 1) to get some air into your lungs. In fact, this is the one exercise with which you should begin each day. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, arms at your sides.

Swing your arms up and outward to your sides, lean back a bit, while at the same time, rise up on your toes. As you do this, take in a deep breath of air. Release the air while lowering your arms and feet to the beginning position. Repeat fifteen times. If possible, breathe in fresh air from outdoors.

Next, loosen up a bit and get some blood flowing. Do a few jumping jacks, swing your arms around a few times, twisting your torso back and forth. Limber up.

Exercise #1 - Pushups

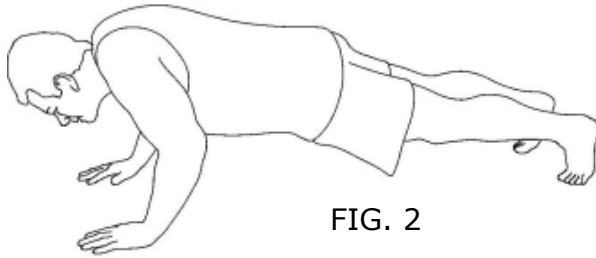


FIG. 2

The Pushup (FIG. 2) is the premier exercise and should be at the core of every exercise program. Pushups primarily build muscular and powerful pectorals, shoulders, and triceps, as well as working your back, abdominals and legs.

Place your hands on the floor, shoulder width apart, arms held straight. Straighten out your body, and, using your arms, lower your chest

toward the floor. Push yourself back up to the beginning position. Repeat as many pushups as you can. Perform each pushup with proper form, keeping your body straight, not bending at the waist, nor dropping your hips, and going all the way down and all the way back up. When you reach a point to where you can no longer do the pushups properly, then you have done enough. As days and weeks go by, you will experience strength and stamina bursts. At those times you can add to your number of pushups.

Rather than placing your hands on a hard floor, fold a towel over a couple of times and place your hands on that. If doing pushups on your hands is too hard on your wrists, do them on clenched fists, or you might prefer doing pushups on a pair of pushup handles, in which case there are many to choose from with an Internet search, or a trip to your local sporting goods store.

If doing pushups on the floor is initially too difficult, make them easier by doing them off of something elevated. You could do them between the seats of two matching chairs. Place the chairs at about 30" apart, place your hands on the seats, and perform the pushups between the chairs. You can do them on the edge of a chair. Place a folded towel over the edge of a chair for hand comfort if need be. You can do pushups between the arms of an arm chair (FIG. 3) - again, folded towels for hand comfort. Do them

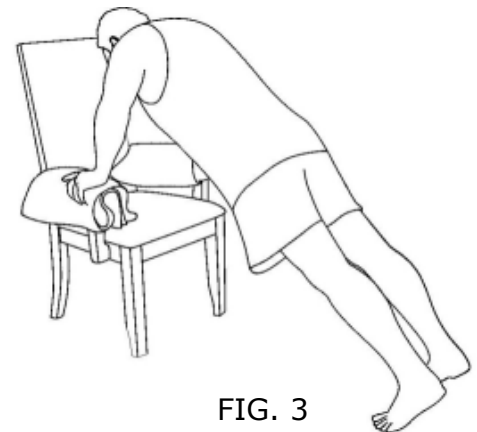


FIG. 3

against the edge of a table, countertop, dresser drawers. You can even do pushups against a wall or between a doorway, while leaning from far enough away to create some resistance.

Caution: When performing pushups, do not lower your chest below the tops of your hands. Doing so could potentially cause shoulder problems. At the top of the pushup, do not lock your elbows.



FIG. 4

Upon completion of a set of pushups, stand and cross your forearms at your abdomen and flex your pectoral muscles (FIG. 4). Hold for 10 seconds, and then switch forearms and repeat.

Next, place the heels of your hands together at chest height, interlock your fingers, raise your elbows parallel to the floor, push the heels of your hands together, and hold for 10 seconds (FIG. 5). Lower your hands to your waist and repeat.

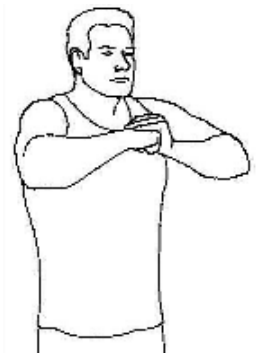


FIG. 5

Exercise 2 – Shoulder Push

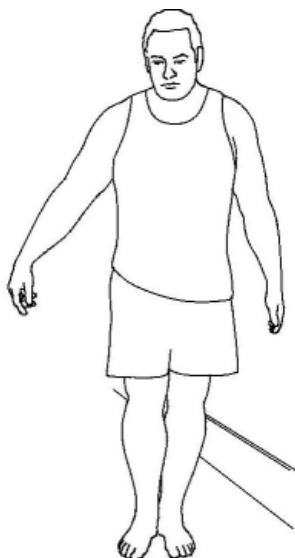


FIG. 6

Lean against a wall on your left side with your left arm straight down at your side and push yourself off of the wall using the back of your left hand (FIG. 6). As you feel the resistance diminishing, go back down for the next repetition. Repeat on your right side. The further away from the wall you are, the more difficult the exercise. Position yourself so that performing 10-15 repetitions is challenging.

You can pad the back of your hand with a folded towel or a hot pad.

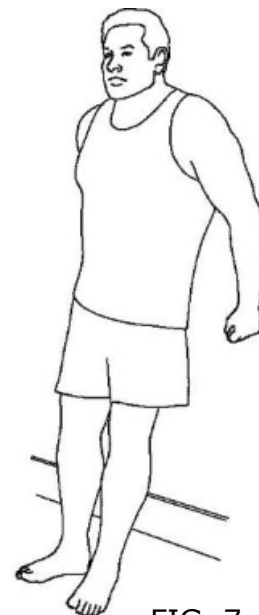


FIG. 7

Exercise #3 - Triceps Extensions

Stand with your back to a wall, about 18" away (FIG. 7). Keeping your arms straight, reach back and place the backs of your fists against the wall. Lean back so that your back touches the wall and then push yourself back up, keeping your arms locked. The further away from the wall you stand, the more difficult the exercise. As you feel the resistance begin to diminish, go back down for the next rep. Position yourself so that performing 10-15 repetitions is challenging. This exercise also works your back. It could also be performed in a doorway by placing your fists on either side of the doorway.

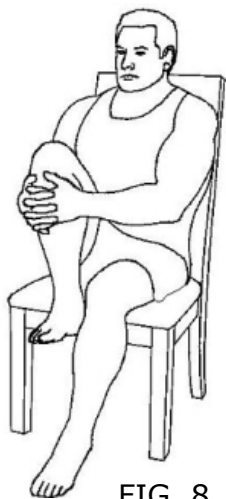


FIG. 8

Before performing Exercises 4 & 5, you need to stretch your knees (FIG. 8). Sit in a chair, raise one knee, bend the leg, clasp your hands around your shin, draw your leg in tightly towards you, and hold it for 10 seconds. Repeat with the other leg. This is also a good back and biceps isometric.

Exercise #4 - Back Rows

Stand in front of the edge of an open door, take hold of the door knobs, underhanded, move your feet to inside either side of the door, squat down a bit, lean all the way back, until your arms are fully extended, and then pull yourself forward for back rows. (FIG. 9) When doing this, squat down to a height that makes this exercise most

effective. You will find that doing so places a lot of stress on your thighs, in effect, a "wall sit", so you've got two exercises in one. You can also wrap a towel around the door knobs and hold onto the ends of that, up close to the door knobs, for an additional grip workout. You can also shift the resistance from one arm to the other, back and forth, making this exercise more difficult. The further in from the edge of the door your feet are, the greater the resistance.

Next, finish off by draping a towel over the top of the door, reach up high with both hands, grab hold of the towel on either side of the door, and pull straight down for a 10 second isometric. (FIG. 10)

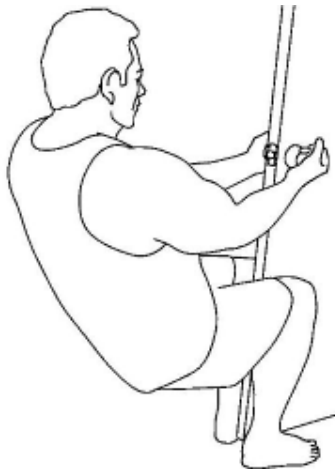


Fig. 9



Fig. 9a

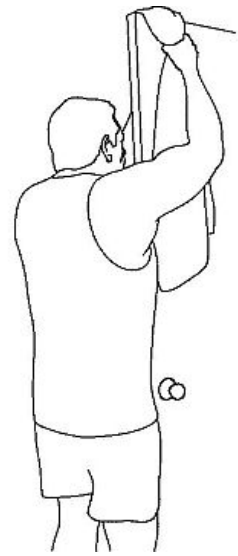


Fig. 10

Exercise #4a

In addition to, or in lieu of Exercise #4, perform back rows by placing a broom over the backs of two matching chairs (FIG 9a), Grab hold of the broom handle, stretch yourself out straight, and pull your chest up to the broom handle.

Exercise #5 - Squats

Wrap a towel around the door knobs of an open door, and stand holding the ends of the towel (FIG. 11). Squat down. Holding onto the ends of a towel will help maintain your balance. You can lean back a bit. Make the squats more effective by shifting your weight from one leg to the other.

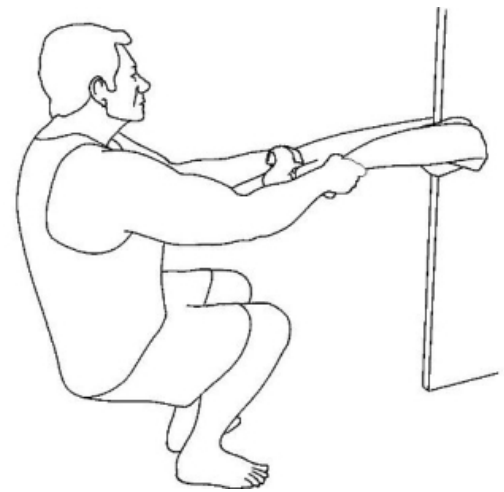


Fig. 11

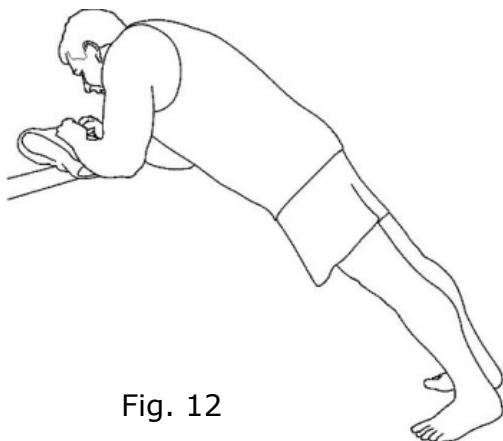
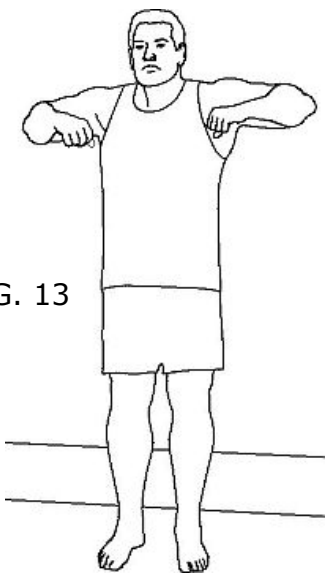


Fig. 12

Exercise #6. Triceps Pushups

Fold a towel up thick and lay it on the edge of a table, chair, desk, counter or dresser drawers (FIG. 12). Place your fists on it, thumb sides up, stretch your body out, lower your forehead to your fists using your arms, and then push yourself back up.

FIG. 13



Exercise #7 - Back Push

From about 18", lean your back against a wall, raise your elbows so that your arms are parallel to the floor, and push yourself off the wall using your elbows (FIG. 13). Position yourself so that performing 10-15 repetitions is challenging. If possible, you can also do this in a corner using the adjacent walls. If you are particularly strong and don't mind getting down on a floor, try pushing yourself off of the floor.

Exercise #8 - Biceps Curl

While seated, lean back against the back of the chair, and clasp your hands together under the knee of your right leg. Let your leg go limp, and then curl it up to your chest as far as you can, first, using only your right hand, and then again using only your left hand, alternating between the two (FIG. 14). You'll find that the resistance increases the higher you lift. When you've lifted as high as your leg will allow, give it an additional, forceful pull. Repeat using the left leg. This works the insides of your forearms and back as well as your biceps.

FIG. 14

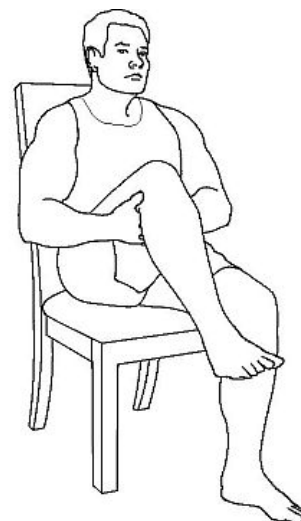
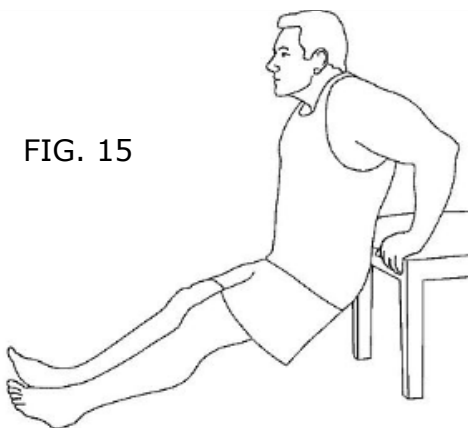


FIG. 15



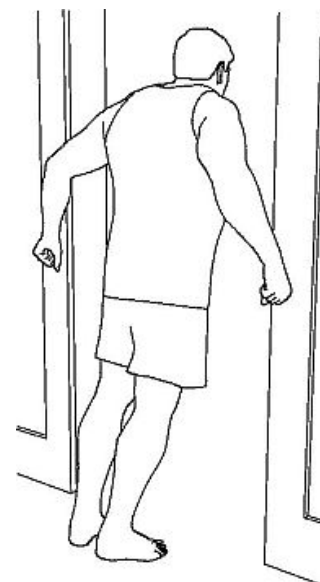
Exercise #9 - Bench Pushups

Standing with your back to the seat of a chair, reach down and place your palms on the edge of the chair (FIG. 15). Extend your feet out, lower yourself using your arms, and then push yourself back up. Elevating your feet on something in front of you, another chair, for example, makes this exercise more difficult.

Exercise #10 - Forward Lean

Stand in a doorway and, with your arms straight down, place the tops of your fists on either door trim (FIG. 16). Lean forward and then pull yourself back up. This works your front deltoids, pectorals, and biceps. You can also use the palms of your hands. The further back from the doorway you stand, the more difficult the exercise. Position yourself so that performing 10-15 repetitions is challenging.

FIG. 16



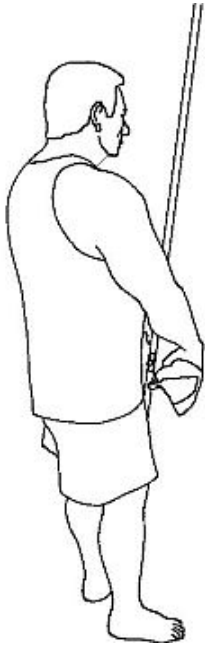


FIG. 17

Exercise #11 - Wrist Curls

Fold two wash cloths in half and drape them over the door knobs of an open door. A pair of hot pads also work well for this (FIG. 17). Stand in front of the edge of the door and take hold of the door knobs. Move your feet further in on either side of the door, and lean back. Rotate the door knobs downward and then upward. Rotating one door knob at a time makes this exercise more difficult. Here's another wrist exercise you may choose to do - stand in a doorway facing one side. (FIG 18) Reach up and place your finger tips against the edge of the door trim. Lean back and pull yourself forward using your fingers.

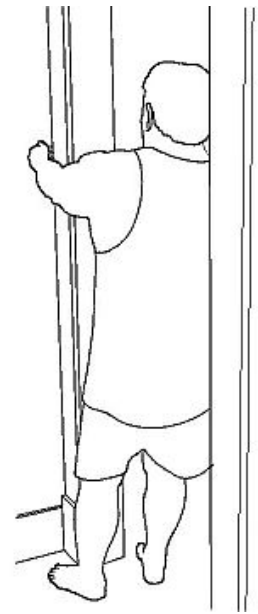


FIG. 18

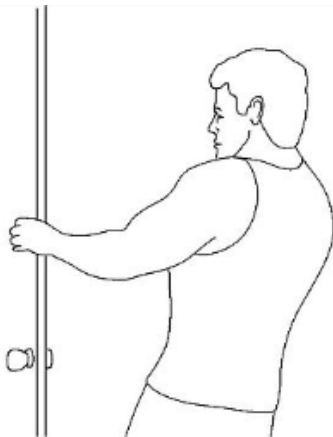


FIG. 19

Exercise #12 - Forearm Pinch

Pinch the edge of an open door and lean back as far as you can and then pull yourself back up (FIG. 19). Also works your back.

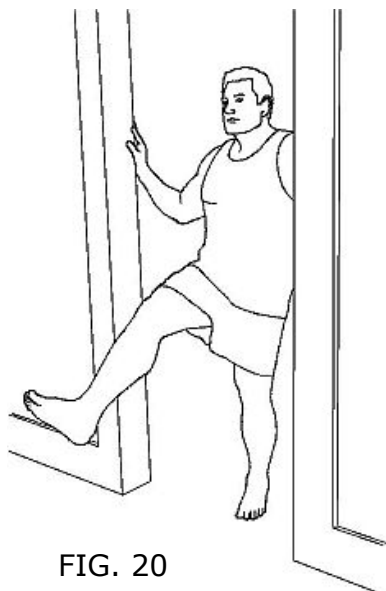


FIG. 20

Exercise #13 - Leg Extensions

Place your hands on either side of an open door for support and then, keeping your right leg straight, raise it as high as you can in front of you and hold it for 10 seconds (FIG. 20). Swing your right leg back and raise it as high as you can behind you and hold it for 10 seconds. (FIG. 21) Repeat with your left leg.



FIG. 21

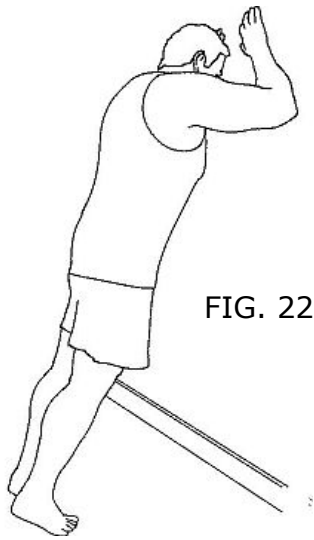


FIG. 22

Exercise #14 – Calf Raises

Lean against a wall, using your forearms against the wall to brace yourself, and extend your feet out, away from the wall about 30" (FIG. 22). Perform calf raises from that position - all the way up on your toes and then all the way back down onto your heels. Shifting your weight from one calf to the other makes this exercise more difficult, although doing so isn't recommended until you've built significant strength in your calves.

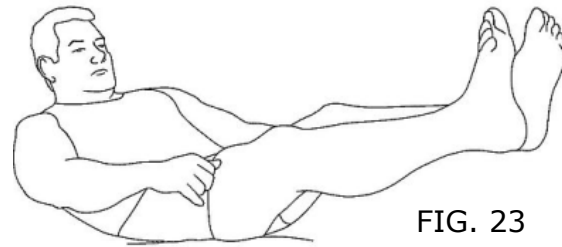


FIG. 23

Exercise #15 – Abdominal Crunch

Lie on a bed. Keeping your legs straight, raise your feet about 12" off of the bed and roll your shoulders forward, lifting them off the bed (FIG 23). Keeping your legs and shoulders off the bed, raise and lower your legs and shoulders slightly, slowly, and twist your torso slightly, slowly, from left to right, pointing your shoulders from one leg to the other, working the muscles of your abdomen.



FIG. 24

Exercise #16 – Oblique Bends

While standing, lift an object of moderate weight directly overhead (a small stack of books, a lightweight suitcase, a jug of water, etc.) (FIG. 24) Bend from side to side, holding one position and then the other for a few seconds.

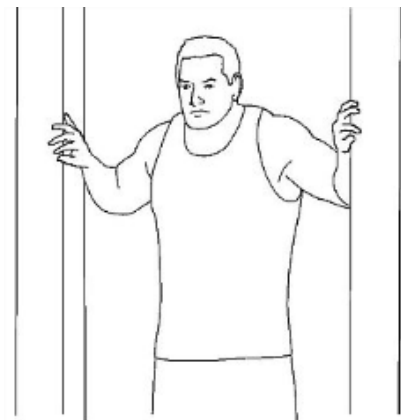


FIG. 25

Exercise #17 - Pillars of Hercules

Finish off the workout with this powerful isometric (FIG. 25). Stand in a doorway and push against the door jambs on either side with your hands, as though trying to push them apart. Hold for 10 seconds. If there is an hallway available, you can do this same exercise within a greater expanse. With the additional room, you can push yourself back and forth, pushing with one arm while resisting with the other.

Walking – Walking is one of the best exercises anyone can do for themselves. Walk whenever you can. On your days off of the workout, try to get in a good 20-30 minute walk, or so. A morning constitution is what it used to be called.

Quick Reference

1. Pushups
 - Pectoral Flex
 - Chest Isometric
2. Shoulder Push
3. Triceps Extension
 - Knee Stretch
4. Back Rows
 - Lat Isometric
- 4a. Back Rows
5. Squats
6. Triceps Pushups
7. Back Push
8. Biceps Curls
9. Reverse Pushups
10. Forward Lean
11. Wrist Curls
 - Finger Pull
12. Forearm Pinch
13. Leg Extensions
14. Calf Raises
15. Abdominal Crunch
16. Oblique Bends
17. Pillars of Hercules

Nutrition

“Finish all your vegetables.” How many times did you hear that growing up? The point is, we all pretty well know what is healthy and what isn’t. I’m not going to go into nutrition in detail here, as anything you could possibly ever want to know can be found on an Internet search. I will say this, though – nutrition is every bit as important as exercise.

Muscle development occurs when the muscle cells are broken down through exercise and repaired when blood rushes in, making the muscles bigger and stronger than they were. This blood carries nutrients to repair those damaged cells, therefore you want to be certain that healthy nutrients are being introduced. Protein is what builds muscle, so you want to be certain that you are furnishing your cells with an adequate amount of protein, which is found in meats, poultry, beans, nuts, fish, milk, and eggs. Milk is an excellent source of protein, and an egg is Nature’s high-protein capsule – protein and 21 vitamins and minerals, all encased in a neat, little package.

As well as protein from these sources, you also need the vitamins and minerals supplied by fresh fruits and vegetables. Don’t get canned vegetables, cook with fresh or fresh frozen vegetables. Fresh frozen vegetables are every bit as good as fresh vegetables, as they’ve simply been frozen when fresh, and with today’s vegetable steamers, preparing good vegetables is a snap.

Apples are a very nutritious fruit. I have a few slices with my breakfast every morning. Slicing up an apple and then cutting out the seeds and core is a bit of a pain, so pick up one of these apple slicers the next time you’re in a grocery store – cores and slices in one easy push!



Bananas are also a super food. I have a banana every morning along with my morning coffee, 20 minutes before my morning workout. Replace sugar with raw, unfiltered honey, another super food. Once you get used to honey in your coffee, if you sweeten your coffee, you’ll never want to go back. Substitute honey for sugar in recipes, on cereal.

You don’t have to drastically change your eating habits, unless, of course, they’re in need of drastic changing. Again, we already pretty well know what is good for us. Make a few changes where you know you should – Cut back on the chili dogs for lunch and have a salad instead. A lot of the fast food restaurants offer healthy salads these days. I have a salad every day for lunch made up of spinach leaves, cherry tomatoes, olives, and some sort of fish – tuna, sardines, smoked oysters, salmon. A wide variety of dressings adds variety. And there’s nothing wrong with a good old fashioned roast beef sandwich with lettuce and tomatoes on multi-grain bread.

For snacks, cut back on the cookies, the doughnuts, the candies. Grapes make an excellent snack, as do nuts. So healthy. Mixed nuts with raisins are great! Almonds are an exceptionally nutritious nut. Dark chocolate covered almonds – to die for! Graham crackers and milk make a great, soothing bedtime snack.

Dinners? Cut back on the lasagna. Have some vegetable steamers and some lean meat. There are hundreds of quick, chicken recipes all over the Internet.

So, you get the picture. If you’re going to go through the effort of building lean muscle, then supply them with the nutrients they need.

You are only as good as your last workout.

You are what you eat.

- pierini