

# Push-ups no pushover

So many are doing them incorrectly

Ashleigh Gleeson

A simple push-up can do a world of good for your chest, shoulders and arms, but experts warn 90 per cent of people are doing it with the wrong technique.

After last week concentrating on the legs and learning about the benefits of squats, the second instalment of the six-week Get Your Body Right series is all about the upper body.

And it can be revealed that a simple towel can be used in your routine to tone your arms, get stronger and have better posture.

Rick Martin, strength and conditioning co-ordinator at Bond University's high-performance training centre in Queensland, said push-ups were a great exercise to do from home as they worked your deltoid, tricep and pectoral muscles as well as your core.

There were also many, many variations to make it easy or harder, he said.

"It's a very good chest exercise to strengthen the chest and tricep muscles and it's very simple to modify if someone can't do it using their full body weight on the floor," he said.

"Definitely one of the best exercises for someone to start at home."

But he said nine out of 10 people he saw usually did push-ups wrong. This included arching the lower back, letting the belly sag down, flaring out the elbows and not having the chin in the right position.

"You need to make sure it's done properly by keeping the elbows in by your side – you should keep them at a 45 degree angle – and don't drop your chin," he said.

"You should also make sure you're not dipping in the lower back."

Mr Martin warned it was important to also prioritise a pulling exercise to make sure you didn't get a rounded back and bad posture.

"You want to be balanced; you want to make sure that if you are doing a chest exercise then you do a back exercise to balance it out," he said.

"You'll find a lot of guys in gyms do bench presses and push-ups and they do a predominance of pushing exercises and not enough pulling exercises to balance that out."

"The consequence of this is it affects

Brandon preps for upper body exercises. Pictures: Jason Edwards



**You want to make sure that if you are doing a chest exercise then you do a back exercise**

Rick Martin

your posture – you get those rounded shoulders because the chest muscles become very tight. You want to strengthen the chest, strengthen the back, and do some flexibility exercises as well."

Kieser exercise scientist Deb Lawrence said a towel was a great household item to help do a seated row – which involves pulling as opposed to pushing – to achieve that balance.

"You get a nice bit of forearm strength from gripping the towel, but you can really feel your biceps working as well as your upper back," she said.

"It's a really great thing to use a towel when you don't have anything at home."

She said it was important to prioritise upper body strength because arms were so important for daily tasks.

**NEXT WEEK: CORE**

**WEEK TWO**

**WALK:** After last week doing 4000 steps a day, aim for 5000, or 30 minutes of walking a day when factoring in your other incidental exercise.

**UPPER BODY EXERCISES:**  
**BEGINNER:** 8-12 repetitions  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 20 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** Go beyond, until fatigued

**PUSH-UP**

**For beginners:** Stand at arm's length from a wall facing it (above right). Put your hands against it. Get up on your tiptoes. While chest proud, slowly bring yourself towards the wall by bending your arms, then slowly push away, remaining on your toes the whole time. To make it more difficult take a further step away and do it from that distance.

**If you want a harder version:** Fold a towel and lay it on the floor to protect your knees. For the easiest version, get on your hands



and knees and drop your weight into your arms. Your hips can remain up the whole time. Lower down slowly and then lift back up. To progress it, move your arms further away from your knees and come forward with your upper body, keeping it as straight as possible. Lower down to the floor with your elbows at 45 degrees and then slowly push back up.

**For an advanced version:**

Move up on to your toes, into a plank position, keeping a straight line with your body. Go as close as you can to the floor, then push back up slowly with your knees off the entire time and your hips remaining flat with your torso.

**PUSH-UP**



**WRIST TWIST**

You can use a broom or mop handle. A small water bottle or can of soup from the pantry is also fine. Start with your arms out in front holding the object like in the photo (right). Then dip one hand down. Squeeze back with the other so the weight of the object is in that arm. Then swap positions. You can do up to 40 repetitions because these muscles are quite strong.



**DIP**



**DIPS**

This exercise uses your chest muscles and triceps. **For beginners:** Find a step and sit on the floor with your back to it. Have your feet on the ground with your legs bent and tucked in. Push through your arms and lift and hold. Then lower your arms back down again. To make it harder, straighten your legs and repeat.

**If you want a harder version:** Put a chair up against a wall. Sit on it and hold on to the edge of the seat or the handles of the chair and bend your legs at 90 degrees. Drop down and push up again with your elbows angled backwards.



**SHOULDER RAISE**

**LYING SHOULDER RAISE**

Lie down – on the floor or bed – face down and have your arms bent out in a W shape. Then squeeze your shoulder blades together and lift your arms parallel to the ground. Hold the lift. Then lower and relax. Repeat.

**SEATED ROW (TOWEL VERSION)**

Sit on the floor with your back against a wall. Have your legs slightly bent and hook the towel over your feet. Go chest proud and pull the towel back while squeezing your shoulder blades. Hold for 30 seconds, then rest and repeat.



## YOUR NEW HOME FOR HEALTH

IMPORTANT TOPICS WE WILL COVER

**FERTILITY** Read personal stories and get the right information

**MENTAL HEALTH** Strategies to help us support ourselves

**DEMENTIA** The latest news to help you deal with the challenges

**AGED CARE** Navigating the complex system to get the best help



**HEALTH WEEKLY**

Full list: Australia's best-rated IVF clinics revealed

**SCAN THE QR CODE TO SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTER**