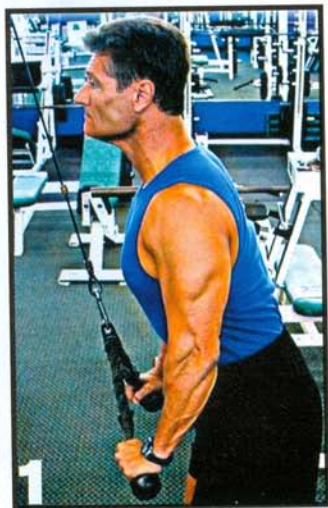


the 3-minute fix for sagging triceps



by Phil Campbell

If you're a fitness professional who has worked with women, you've undoubtedly been asked, "What can I do to firm up my triceps?"

The reason triceps are such troubled areas for most women is simple. The traditional speed of movement when exercising triceps only works half of the muscle – the slow fiber. And the fix is as simple as gaining an understanding and explaining to your clients how the triceps differ from other muscle groups.

First, triceps are extremely durable muscles. Have you ever heard of someone with a triceps injury? Most haven't. Triceps are tough, durable muscles. And triceps are loaded with fast-muscle fiber. If you're only using the traditional resistance-training tempo (of up-on-two, down-on-four) with triceps exercises, you're only working half of the muscle fiber.

Everyone tends to think of triceps as a group of three muscles. And this is correct, but

there are also three different muscle fiber types in the triceps that move (and get recruited) at the three different rates of speed.

We all have slow, fast, and super-fast muscle fiber. And just prior to working your trainee's triceps, it will be helpful to explain muscle fiber composition, using the description of "All of us have slow, fast, and super-fast muscle fiber" (which is much easier than explaining type I, type IIa, and type IIb, or depending on where you trained, "IIX").

Now, add some info about muscle activation. Clients seem to understand this principle when I explain that "The body always sends the slow muscle fiber to accomplish the task first because the body wants you to endure all day."

Your body doesn't know that you're on lunch break and need to work your triceps in three minutes. The body thinks it is helping you by staying in the slow fiber default position so

you can endure all day rather than get in a great 3-minute triceps workout.

But when you move the triceps fast, the brain and the nervous system sense and communicate that the body needs to recruit the fast fiber (that moves five times faster than the slow) to assist the slow fiber in making the movement. And when the movement is faster and more intense, the nervous system calls on the super-fast fiber (that moves 10 times faster than the slow) to jump in and accomplish the task.

To effectively work your triceps for fast results, you need your nervous system to get beyond the default position of only using the slow-muscle fiber. To work the triceps, it is necessary to move fast and recruit the fast fiber. And you can do this in three minutes with three sets of E-lift press-downs.

E-LIFT PRESS-DOWNS

You can use E-lift techniques on your client's triceps in several different ways; however, my personal favorite is press-downs with a rope. The rope allows the elbows, wrists and shoulders to move and flow naturally during the exercise (like throwing a ball).

There are two parts to each of these three sets of E-lift press-downs. First, perform 10 reps by vigorously pressing the rope handles downward with an outward flair at the end of the repetition, as shown in the photos. Keeping your spine straight, bend at your knees and slightly lean forward, as this makes it easier to balance and isolate the triceps while removing stress from the lower back during faster-than-normal movement.

Traditional thinking is to stand perfectly straight so you can reinforce good posture and work abs and triceps, but E-lift press-downs are too intense to work any more than one muscle group. So the goal is to concentrate only on the triceps and

position the body so the triceps can move fast. Slightly bending forward reduces tension on the abs, lower back, and isolates the triceps, which is needed when speeding up the velocity of the concentric, push-away movement during the exercise.

Now that you have the basic movement down, let's add another key element – muscle fiber recruitment. Remember, the body thinks it is helping by staying in the default slow-fiber mode. And the body instinctively uses momentum to lessen intensity once an exercise begins to become difficult. But when the nervous system senses the explosive push-away from the center of the body from a

paused starting position, the fast fiber gets recruited to accomplish the movement.

Encourage additional intensity by making sure there is a stop and brief pause in the starting position between reps. "Don't forget the pause" is good coaching once you see the trainee begin to rush the stop-and-pause. Not stopping, and rushing the pause, are natural because the body wants to get back into the slow-fiber default mode, and coaching can help clients keep the fast fiber engaged.

You can use less resistance or lighter weight, approximately 10 to 20 percent less than normal, because the reps will be more

intense from the increased velocity. Triceps should be near exhaustion at 10 reps. And you should feel the "flare-out" becoming difficult on the last few reps.

Now begin the second phase **without resting**. Drop the weight by 10 pounds, and pump out reps to finish the set. The first set should be around 10 reps, but the pump-out reps drop quickly after the first set. And this is a good sign the fast (not-meant-to-endure) fiber is being worked. Position your client's hands together, elbows tight to the sides, and begin pumping reps straight down, keeping the hands side-by-side throughout the pump-out finish,

as shown. Shoot for 10 more pump-out reps, but be prepared for exhaustion to come sooner than anticipated

The pump-out for the last 10 reps should have your triceps really "burning," which is a great way to know that you are working the muscle for superior results. It's good to remind your trainees before every set that triceps are tough, durable muscles that need higher intensities to get results: "Try to push through the burn for superior results."

Keep in mind that you're only doing three sets, so make every rep count and push the strong, durable triceps to failure during every set. Rest 1.5 to 2 minutes between sets, and be prepared to drop the weight by 10 pounds on the last set.

Note in the photos that the cable doesn't travel straight down; it angles slightly away from the weight stack. This lessens intensity on the lower back and abs and allows the focus only on the triceps.

I'm frequently asked, "How many times will I need to do E-lift press-downs before I know that I'll get results?" My answer is "once." Give E-lift press-downs a test drive and your trainees will appreciate the superior results by working the fast fiber in the triceps. 📌

