



INTRODUCTION TO CALISTHENICS TRAINING

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INTRODUCTION TO CALISTHENICS

WHAT IS CALISTHENICS?

Calisthenics, also called Street Workout, gained worldwide reputation after 2008 video of Hannibal for King went viral on YouTube. Since then, increasingly more people have trained it as well as national and international competitions have emerged. It derives its name from two Greek words *kálos* which means beauty and *sthénos* which means strength. Calisthenics is a discipline in which you train your whole body using only bodyweight exercises. You have probably seen people doing gravity-defying gymnastic figures such as Front Lever and Planche or dynamic acrobatic skills on the bars such as Muscle Up. This is the sole idea of Calisthenics – to perform workouts with nothing else but your own body.

The exercises usually involve presses and pulls. They enhance your body's strength, endurance, coordination, flexibility and also give you this ripped look that many want to achieve. Think of movements such as push ups, pull ups, dips, squats. Little do people know how many of different variations of exercises are there to train their body. Do not worry, this guide is here to help you get started and make sense of Calisthenics.

Calisthenics is also appealing for one very good reason. It combines functionality and true bodyweight strength with aesthetic shredded look. That being said, not only will you develop muscle power but also impressive physique along that.

So do you want to step up your game? Continue reading to find out how!

WHY SHOULD YOU TRAIN CALISTHENICS?

I could write down dozens of benefits of training Calisthenics, but I will stick to the most crucial ones. So is Calisthenics for you? Even though I do not know you, I can almost surely say – YES.

NO EQUIPMENT NEEDED

If for whatever reasons you are not able to go to gym on a regular basis there is nothing wrong with that. Calisthenics exercises allow you to train wherever you like. You only need a bit of a floor space and a pull-up bar (you can get one from Amazon for a few dollars).

DIFFERENT LEVEL OF EXERCISES

There are hundreds of variations of bodyweight exercises. That being said, it does not matter if you are new to Calisthenics or have been actively training various sports for years. You will always find an exercise that challenges you. For example, a beginner might stick to knee-assisted push ups whereas an advanced athlete could go for one arm push ups. This holds true for any other movements so you will always find something for yourself.

WEIGHT LOSS OR MUSCLE MASS GAIN

With Calisthenics you can lose your weight as well as gain muscle mass. This only depends on how you structure your workouts (I will cover it in the following sections). Remember that nutrition and caloric intake is crucial here as well.

DEVELOP NATURAL BODY STRENGTH

The beauty of Calisthenics is that you train using natural movements of your body. Having said that, you develop natural body strength. You also involve all minor parts of your muscles as well as strengthen your tendons and put in a good motion your joints.

ADVANCED SKILLS

Do not get discouraged when you see all of these advanced movements. Out of thousands of people training Calisthenics only a part of most devoted athletes decide to go for the hardest skills like these written before. But if you are reading this we assume that you are one of them. And we will teach you and show you how to do Muscle Ups, Front Lever, Human Flag, Planche, and others.

CALIATHLETICS

I was an average skinny guy with no passion or goals in my life. I did not like my body and really hated how I look. At one point it was enough for me and I decided to change. Firstly, I joined a gym for a couple of months but then saw it was not for me. I got introduced to Calisthenics. This is how it all started, day after day, workout after workout. It was tough at the beginning, I barely could do basic exercises. As time passed, however, I made it.

I learnt Muscle Up.

I learnt Human Flag.

I learnt Handstand.

I learnt even more.

I made more progress and completely changed how I look, improved my self-confidence, met amazing people and my girlfriend during my journey. I changed my life.

I shared my journey on YouTube and thanks to you guys it has hit more than 10,000,000 views. I received a very warm feedback and it was amazing to see how many other people got inspired and started similar journey. Many of you started asking me for help on how to train, what to eat, how to progress quickly - I helped every single person with this, as many of them were going through struggles similar to mine. It was difficult, however, to give each person detailed advice in a few messages, or to create an individual workout program for everyone.

At this point, I decided to transfer everything I have learnt about Calisthenics into my very own, detailed Calisthenics workout program. Having tested every possible exercise and training method on myself, I now know which ones are the most effective and injury-free. I wanted my program to be suitable for everyone so I created as many as 20 levels of workout plans of different difficulty which will guide you starting from being total beginner to Calisthenics elite level eventually. What is different about my program is that apart from developing a great body and becoming the strongest version of yourself, you will also achieve some of advanced Calisthenics skills that you may have seen on YouTube.

I also do realise that not everyone is so committed to Calisthenics or can afford my program for various reasons. That is why I decided to create and publish this ebook on how to start Calisthenics. I hope that you will find it useful.

MUSCLE MASS, ENDURANCE, SKILLS – DIFFERENT WAYS OF TRAINING

Before we dig into specific exercises that you can perform it is important to establish your goal. Not everyone wants to achieve the same thing. Workout plan should be tailored depending on how advanced you are and what you want to achieve.

Do you want to gain muscle mass and strength or learn Calisthenics skills?

Different goals require different workout plans and diets (we cover nutrition later). In this guide we distinguish the following ways of training: hypertrophy training, endurance, skills, strength and explosive power. I must stress the importance of matching your workouts with diet. In this section we focus only on trainings. Reference to the section where we cover diets for nutrition guide.

TRAINING FOR GAIN MUSCLE MASS – HYPERTROPHY TRAINING

The process of building muscle mass is as following:

Firstly, you damage your muscle fibres during workout + have progressive overload.
Secondly, you eat accordingly staying on caloric surplus.
Thirdly, you sleep enough to regenerate.

So can it be that difficult to build mass? Many struggle with this because they do not really know how to do it in a right way.

Training structured for building mass will incorporate high intensity resistance exercises and medium number of reps. There are many ways of doing this, two most popular are Full Body Workout and split training routines. With FBW you train your whole body during one training session and with split training you train each muscle group on separate days.

Jumping straight into examples, find the workout routine for intermediate back & biceps mass building below.

BACK & BICEPS

Warm-up

Explosive close grip pull ups – 3 reps x4

Muscle up negatives - 1x8

Chin ups – 8 reps x4

Rotator cuff curls on rings – 8 reps x4

Pull ups – 6 reps x4

Bar curls – 6 reps x4

Rest 2-4 minutes between each set.

Let's now break it down. Notice that these are difficult exercises that intend to challenge an intermediate level athlete. There is a medium number of reps and sets. You should do your workout on 100%, no excuses. However, do not go too hard and rather stay on the close-to-maximum number of repetitions to minimize chances of an injury. On the next workout add a couple of reps. This is one example factor of progressive overload. You should always be aiming for doing more than you did a workout before. Go for that extra mile.

Okay, but what if you are an advanced Calisthenics athlete and can easily do 15 pull ups? Well, if you want to focus on build muscle mass you can go for longer eccentric movement, move to more advanced exercises or simply add weights. For example, if you can easily do 15 pull ups then try adding 5kg-10kg of weight so that the new maximum will be 8 reps. Continue doing this and increasing weight attached as you

progress.

Lastly, eat well (refer to the nutrition part of the ebook), rest and recover. This is very important. Muscles grow when you are on a caloric surplus and sleep. Be careful not to overtrain yourself and aim for at least 8 hours of sleep per night. Your muscles grow when you are sleeping – not when you are working out.

TRAINING FOR INCREASING MAXIMUM STRENGTH

Have you ever seen people doing dips with 50kg or 100kg additional weight and ever wondered how the hell have they done it? This section covers method of training to achieve this. Now as we have covered principles of hypertrophy training I will describe how to increase your maximum strength. This is true that sometimes you can build both muscle mass and strength in the same time, but in order to really get your body to be stronger it is worth focusing primarily on neurological adaptations which are the base of strength training.

SEE THE EXAMPLE FOR ADVANCED FBW STRENGTH WORKOUT.

Warm-up

Weighted pull ups (heavy weight) – 5x5

Handstand push ups – 5x5

Weighted dips (heavy weight) – 5x5

Archery pull ups – 5x5

Inverted bodyweight deadlift (core exercise on bar) 5x5

Rest atleast 2-4 minutes between sets or even more.

Your goal is to increase weight in weighted exercises or move to harder progressions (in bodyweight exercises) in the following workouts. Adding even 2,5kg by each workout will let you build real strength and improve your performance.

Strength training reps will be lower, it is good to keep them around 5, but can be even as low as 1. As a result, number of sets can increase to as high as even 10 sets per exercise. There is an inverse relationship between number of reps and intensity (added weight) of the exercise. Rest times, along with Calisthenics skills training, should be much longer than during usual hypertrophy training and muscular endurance training. Aim for up to a few minutes of rest between sets/cycles.

How does it translate to Calisthenics training? Taking pull ups as the example, if you can only do 5 pull ups you should not focus too much on weighted training yet. If you are more advanced, however, and can easily perform 12-15 strict pull ups it might be a good idea to add more weight to your workouts. For strength training attach weight with which you will not be able to do more than a few reps, otherwise you move to hypertrophy area.

Be sure to rest properly after a workout session so you do not risk of getting an injury from overtraining, but try to keep the frequency of workouts high so the neurological adaptations build up and increase your strength. This is sort of a grey area where you will need to listen to your body as it is very hard to write general rule that could be applied to everyone.

TRAINING FOR LEARNING CALISTHENICS SKILLS

Calisthenics skills are really cool, right? Many people start the journey of learning them but they do not succeed. There are two types of skills movements – isometric holds and dynamic movements. Isometric skills are Front lever, Planche, Handstand, Back lever and others that require you to hold a certain position for a short period of time. Dynamic skills, on the other hand, are strength moves in which you perform eccentric and concentric parts of the move. Think about Muscle up or 90 degrees push up. There is a signifi-

cant overlap between Calisthenics skills and strength training. The only difference is the focus on a movement. When training skills you train skills – not your maximum weighted pull ups or dips. There is one very important thing that you have to keep in mind when learning Calisthenics skills – frequency. Front lever, Planche, Muscle Up or any other dynamic/isometric movement requires solid amount of training. I mean training at least 3x-4x times a week or even everyday. Check my video on 3 methods of training skills.

HOW TO TRAIN CALISTHENICS SKILLS

(YOUTUBE NAME: CALIATHLETICS)



In my Body Transformation Program, I recommend using these methods as they have proven successful for me and many of athletes that I have trained. Let's again take an example for an intermediate level athlete.

Intermediate level athlete is learning this coveted Muscle up and this is how he may structure his training.

Warmup

SKILLS TRAINING

Muscle up

Dynamic pull ups - 2x4

Resistance band muscle ups - 3x8

Negative muscle ups - 1x10

Back lever

Back lever straddle holds 3x5sec

Back lever negatives 3x6

Skin the cat 3x8

One-legged back lever raises 2x6

FULL BODY WORKOUT TRAINING

Pull ups 4 sets

Handstand push ups 4sets

Straight bar dips 4sets

Chin ups 4 sets

Push ups (regular and diamond) 3sets

Bar curls 3sets

Jumping squats 4sets

Leg raises to the bar 3sets

Plank 2sets

As always we start with a proper warmup and straight away move to skills training. In this workout plan the athlete will train the Muscle up and the Back lever following it then with the FBW training to develop his base further. Keep in mind that breaks within the sets in skills training should be long (around 3-5 mins). Intensity of the workout should be high, that means the holds should be shorter but more demanding with same principles applying for dynamic moves. FBW should not be too exhausting as the athlete will perform this routine a few times a week and his/her body needs to recover. I know that for some of you it may be difficult to come up with the full training schedule for yourself but listen to your body and do not overtrain yourself. For the readers that want to step ahead of the game I encourage to check my Body Transformation Program – with very detailed instructions on how to train and 20 levels of different workout routines you will quickly learn all the skills that you want.

There are two more methods of training skills that I described in the video. The other one is quite similar with more focus on skills and less on FBW training but grease the groove deserves a few sentences. Grease the groove means to train a move a few times per day. On the example of the handstand, you wake up – you train handstand, you finish eating – you train handstand, you get back from school/work – you train handstand. Of course only a few attempts will be enough! This applies for any other skills as well. Grease the groove should be combined with regular workouts of a particular skill, so if you decide to grease the groove Front lever you still should be training it a couple of times per week using more structured workouts (such as mentioned above).

To wrap everything together, high frequency and high intensity are golden rules of skill training, but be careful with your progressions and do not overtrain as you risk getting an injury.

TRAINING FOR MUSCULAR ENDURANCE

Hitting high maximum resistance is one thing, but being able to pull yourself up a decent 15 times is completely another. Same applies the opposite way. If you can make 15 strict pull ups you still might not be able to pull yourself up with attached weight or do a muscle up. Whilst there is an overlap between different methods of training, in order to increase maximum repetition number, you need to focus on muscular endurance.

There are a few principles of training for muscular endurance that I describe below. This type of training is exhausting and you really need to push yourself as hard as you can. Your mind is working as much as your body. As a result, you will be breaking new records of maximum repetitions very fast.

Let's take the example intermediate back/biceps routine.

WARMUP

Pull ups MAX

Australian Pull ups MAX

Chin ups MAX

Australian Chin ups MAX

Negative Archer Pull ups MAX

Complete cycle 5x times.

Rest times 30 seconds between sets, 1 minute to 1:30 minute between cycles.

Make sure that you always execute good form also in last reps! If you go for maximal or submaximal reps there's no place for a bad form as it might easily turn out into injury.

Warmup first, nothing new. Number of repetitions is completely different, however. MAX means that you should perform maximum number of repetitions that you can perform with perfect form. When the form breaks, you reached your max - push yourself to the limit. Notice how short are breaks between sets. In muscular endurance training the volume and intensity should be very high. A general rule of thumb is to perform more than 12 repetitions during each set. Consequently, resistance should be low. So if you are a beginner level athlete take much easier exercises such as jumping Pull ups, negatives and Australians instead of normal ones (in case of back/biceps routine). You are likely to be very exhausted so be sure you recover properly after each workout session and do not overtrain yourself as you are risking getting an injury. Remember that each workout should have progressive overload, that means you should be improving your results week by week.



BUILDING YOUR BODY WITH CALISTHENICS – EXERCISES

CHEST CALISTHENICS EXERCISES

I do not know a single guy who would not want to have big, developed chest muscles. They are, along with nice shredded abs, one of the mostly sought after physical characteristics. You might have heard that it is very hard to build chest without weights or exercises such as bench press, but in fact this could not be further from the truth.

TARGET CHEST SPECIFICALLY

There are reasons why some people think it is much harder to build chest with bodyweight exercises. Calisthenics involve compound movements which involve more muscles during each exercise. That means you cannot really isolate some muscles as easily as you could in the gym. Is it something bad then? Not at all. You can still build your chest if you do it the right way. Push-ups and dips not only engage your chest muscles but they also activate your triceps and front deltoids. So it is important to keep in mind that by working on your chest you will be developing them as well.

There are countless variations of push ups and dips, they all involve chest but to a different extent. The key point here is to perform exercises that target chest specifically.

What do I mean by this? Think about push ups, you can do wide, regular and diamond ones. You can do it with hands elevated as well as with your feet elevated. You can do slow ones and explosive ones. How does it work then?

The wider your hands are the more you activate your chest.

The higher your feet are, the more you activate your upper chest.

The higher your hands are, the more you activate your lower chest.

With so many exercises engaging chest it might be difficult to choose the best ones, that is why I did it for you.

3 RECOMMENDED CALISTHENICS EXERCISES THAT WILL BUILD YOUR CHEST

3 Calisthenics exercises to build chest that I think are the best are Chest Dips, Wide Push-ups and Incline & Decline Push-ups. Remember – perfect form, full range of motion and controlled movement!

CHEST DIP

You might be familiar with this one but, actually, dips are tricky ones. Depending on how you position your body you can be either engaging your chest or your triceps more (or even shoulder sometimes!). How do you go about building chest with dips? 3 main rules to follow:

Bent forward more than usually with your torso and legs.

Elbows close to your body.

Head position neutral.

This is my personal favourite as few exercises can activate your chest as much as this one.

WIDE PUSH-UPS

Push-ups are compound exercise and by doing them with your hands widely set apart – you target your chest more. They are not as complicated as dips, although they are very effective! Start off by placing your hands in wider-than-shoulder distance, position your body in the straight line and squeeze your core.

INCLINE & DECLINE PUSH-UPS

Okay so it is actually four exercises, as here I cover both, incline and decline push ups. Decline push ups will generally be harder and they will target more your upper chest whereas incline push ups might be a bit easier than normal push ups and will engage your lower chest more. How to do them? Simply put your feet

higher than your hands (decline) or put your hands higher than your feet (incline). You can use a bench, a chair or anything you would like. Remember to keep your body straight and squeeze your core as well!

Definitely there are many ways to activate your chest and different parts of it. I explained 3 best calisthenics exercises that are the best ones for building chest in my opinion, but there are many more and I encourage you to try and play with other exercises as well. Always remember about the warm-up and proper form when doing them.

BACK CALISTHENICS EXERCISES

Bodyweight exercises are one of the best ways to develop back. Pull ups, some hate them and some love them. I hope you are going to love them! They will be your staple in order to build that back. Whenever you want to have the V shape look, learn a muscle up or just develop your back muscles - different variations of pull ups will get you there.

With so many different variations everybody will find an exercise for their level of advancement. Do not get intimidated by the difficulty of this exercise, we have all started somewhere, right? To target your back muscles when doing pull ups you should perform them with an overhand grip (on the contrary to chin ups which focus on your biceps). Consider three different variations - wide, neutral and close grip pull ups. Wide grip will emphasise your lats, whilst close grip will put stress on your lower lats. If you cannot do proper pull ups yet try to do negatives or Australian pull ups which we also cover in this section. Generally speaking, pull ups are very compound exercises that also engage biceps and, to the lower extent, chest.

PULL UPS (WIDE/NEUTRAL/CLOSE GRIP)

The key when performing pull ups is to activate your shoulders (active hang rather than relaxed hang) by retracting them and pushing down. Focus on keeping your body straight and do not kip or swing. This is important as this will engage primarily your back muscles. Remember, quality over quantity. If you find these too hard try to start with negatives firstly, or use resistance bands to make it easier. Find normal pull ups too easy but archer pull up too hard? Try performing pull ups whilst holding L-sit. This requires much more strength than normal pull up.

AUSTRALIAN PULL UPS (W/N/C)

Some call it an inverted bodyweight row. Be as strict as you would have been when doing normal pull ups and activate your shoulders. This is an exercise which is ideal for building strength to perform more advanced pulling movements. You may also experiment with different grips! Wide, normal and close grips are not reserved only for usual pull ups.

ARCHERY PULL UPS

This is an advanced move that will take your pulling game to the next level. It really requires solid foundation so keep working on your basics before you try this one! Keep one of your arms completely straight and then pull yourself up to the side of the pulling arm. Then repeat with the other arm. Make sure to, as always, have your shoulders activated and keep your body straight.

In general, pull ups and its variations will develop your back. Keep in mind that lower back will be considered in abs/core section. If you are a beginner, do more Australian pull ups and other preparatory moves such as negative or resistance band pull ups. Advanced athletes who will find normal pull ups too easy may switch to L-sit pull ups, weighted pull ups or archer pull ups to target their back even more! Remember that wide, neutral and close grips focus on different parts of your back and try to mix them.

SHOULDERS CALISTHENICS EXERCISES

Do you want to look bigger? Build your shoulders. The best thing about them is that movements that I am

going to show you are compound exercises that not only will develop your deltoids but also your whole upper body.

There are 3 heads of shoulders – front, middle and rear. That means to really hit your deltoids you need to do it with different moves and angles. Make sure you really focus on engaging your shoulders here by sticking to perfect form in each exercise. This might require building more strength with easier progressions in the first place before moving on to harder exercises.

HANDSTAND PUSH UP

This is a very compound exercise which will put pressure on your front deltoids. The good thing about them is that you do not need know how to handstand because you can do them against the wall. Keep your body straight, not bent like a banana. When going down try to touch floor with your nose and always extend your arm fully to perform full range of motion. This is a bit advanced exercise so if you are beginner build your strength first with pike push ups.

BODYWEIGHT FACE PULLS

Face pulls are usually done to focus on rear deltoids. As we are focusing on bodyweight exercises, we want to perform them only with our own body. To do so, find a pull up bar waist/chest high and hold it like you were doing an Australian pull up. Keep your body straight and go up to your face. This is the bodyweight equivalent of normal face pull exercise.

PSEUDO PLANCHE PUSH UPS

This is a great exercise for general shoulder development. Start as with Planche leans and move forward with your body. Then just start doing push ups. Elbows close to body, body straight. Keep in mind you want to do them in a controlled manner whilst keeping the perfect form. Do not worry if you find it too hard, just do smaller lean so that you can keep the good form.

I am sure these exercises will be great ones to incorporate in your shoulder training routine. They focus on different heads of your deltoids and engage other muscles in your upper body. I mention this quite a few times in this ebook, but I will mention once again – keep perfect form. It is always better to perform an easier variations of an exercise but to do it the way it should be done.

TRICEPS CALISTHENICS EXERCISES

People always say that they want to have huge arms. So they do bicep curls and all of the biceps exercises whilst neglecting the triceps. But do you know what? It is triceps that makes 2/3 of your arm. Many forget about the importance of the triceps and you definitely should not be one of them! There are many ways to build triceps but bodyweight exercises are amongst the best ones. So if you want to have developed arms, make Muscle Ups easier for you or just be strong this section is for you.

TRICEPS – WHAT, HOW AND WHY

Triceps consists of 3 heads. Usually, the exercises engage all of them but they do it to a different extent. This is why it is important to properly train and develop all 3 triceps heads. You target different heads more or less depending on the angle of your arms during each movement.

Triceps consist of:

- Long head
- Medial head
- Lateral head

What is even better, by training triceps properly not only will you build your arms but it will also be easier to do skills such as Muscle Ups or Impossible Dips. Why? Because they simply require strong triceps. That is why I put below 4 exercises that I believe are the best ones for building triceps.

4 RECOMMENDED CALISTHENICS EXERCISES THAT WILL BUILD YOUR TRICEPS

When training triceps it is very important to keep elbows close to your body in the exercises I list below, otherwise other muscles will be involved and less stress will be put on the triceps.

Ready? Let's move to the exercises. I chose 1 compound triceps exercise and 3 that will focus on different triceps heads.

STRAIGHT BAR DIPS – TRICEPS GENERAL

This one is a bit different than normal dips as you use straight bar dip in front of you rather than two bars on the sides of your body. Straight Bar Dip is also a pre-requisite move for mastering the Muscle Up. This is a compound exercise which engage primarily your triceps and chest and also your front deltoids to a lower extent. Lean a bit forward and keep your arms close to your body, elbows facing behind you and head neutral. Then simply perform the dip by going lower and returning to the starting position.

Let's now dig into moves that isolate triceps more and activate its different heads.

SKULL CRUSHERS – LONG HEAD

Whoever told you that you need weights to build triceps definitely was not aware of this exercise. Find a bar, preferably waist to chest high (the lower the bar the more your triceps is engaged), and grasp it with your hands, palms facing forward (pull-up grip). Squeeze your core and bent your elbows whilst keeping them narrow until you touch a bar with your head and then return to starting position by extending the triceps. Some of you might find it challenging, but it is definitely worth doing.

BENCH DIPS – MEDIAL HEAD

You will need something to place your hands on for this exercise, could be a bench, a chair, a bar – whatever you have. Say, you got a bench, keep it behind you and position your hands on it with your palms facing straight (the direction where you look). Focus on activating your triceps in this exercise by keeping your elbows close to your body. Keep your legs extended in front of you or place them higher (on another bench/chair) if you want to make the exercise more challenging. This exercise will help you develop necessary strength for Korean Dips.

DIAMOND PUSH-UPS – LATERAL HEAD

As you might have learnt from the section on How to Build Chest with Calisthenics, push-ups engage both, your chest and triceps. Which muscles are mostly involved depends on how widely you spread your hands. Here is how to do it. Put your hands down and make a diamond shape out of your fingers, bring your elbows close to your body, squeeze your core and keep the body straight. As simple as that, but be careful, they might be challenging for beginners! If so, simply help yourself by going on your knees.

These 4 exercises will serve you as an amazing base for developing strength for more challenging moves as well as building your triceps in general. Triceps consist of 3 heads and you should be careful not to focus too much on some heads whilst neglecting the others. Perfect form here is crucial because other muscles might get easily engaged and you will not work your triceps as much as you would like to. You should really focus on the triceps extension by keeping your elbows close to your body.

BICEPS CALISTHENICS EXERCISES

Could you believe if I told you that you can build big arms with NO weights? We have already covered how to build triceps with Calisthenics, now it is a time to talk about how to build biceps with Calisthenics. There

are many bodyweight exercises that focus primarily on biceps and will get you the bigger, toned muscle look that many want to achieve. Continue reading if you want to know how to develop these huge arms that will make your t-shirt tight on the sleeves.

CALISTHENICS BICEPS BUILDING

The logic behind building biceps is to do bicep curls. Although many do them with barbells, we focus here on bodyweight exercises that activate this muscle. There are many ways to engage biceps and we will cover three of them, going from staple exercise such as chin-ups to more sophisticated movements like behind-the-bar Australian chin-ups.

Ready? Let's move to the exercises.

CHIN-UPS

The importance of this exercise is huge. This is a compound movement that, although is similar to pull-up, focuses mainly on your biceps. This is done because you change your grip on the bar and your palms are facing towards you (not forward, like during pull-ups). By doing so, more stress is being put on your biceps. Back and shoulders, however, are still active but to a lower extent. You can think of chin-ups as if you were doing bicep curls with your whole bodyweight.

In terms of proper technique, remember to keep your palms facing towards you and your body straight, also do not help yourself with other muscles. That means no momentum and focusing on activating your biceps. This will get you these nicely developed arms!

BAR CURLS

Find a bar which is around waist/chest high (does not have to be exactly that height, the lower it is the harder it goes) and go under it. Grab the bar with a chin-up grip and keep your body straight. During the exercise it is crucial that you focus on that bicep curl rather than pulling with your back. To do it, keep your elbows in the same position and isolate the biceps so you do not do a pull-up movement. If you do it correctly, you will really feel the burn in your arms!

BEHIND-THE-BAR AUSTRALIAN CHIN-UPS

Similarly to the previous exercise, find a bar around waist/chest high and stand so the bar is behind you and grab it with a chin-up grip. Now go under a bar (notice that your body is facing ground) and keep your body straight. As always when training biceps, focus on that bicep curl when bringing your body up to the bar. This is a more difficult exercise than previous ones but if you are serious about developing enormous biceps strength – definitely try this one.

When building biceps with Calisthenics you really need to focus on isolating biceps in these exercises so the perfect form is very important here. Chin-up is a compound movement that will serve you as a base for developing biceps whilst Bar Curl and Behind-the-bar Australian Chin-Up are more biceps-only exercising which will complement the foundation that you will have built with Chin-ups.

HOW TO BUILD CORE/ABS WITH CALISTHENICS

Want to become a superhuman? Have a superhuman core. All of advanced movements require you to have very strong core muscles. Think of front lever, back lever, Planche, human flag. Yes, they do engage many other muscle groups but the primary requirement is a strong core.

Core muscles include abdominal muscles but are not limited to them as they also include many other muscle groups that act as stabilisers for our body and force transfer centre. In others words, core muscles are engaged in almost everything you do. This is why it is very important to have developed core. As a side effect there is a good chance you will have nice visible abs as well (refer to the nutrition section for more info on that)! In this section I focus on developing both – your core and your abs. Keep in mind that core

works in most of the basic exercises if you perform them properly and also in a lot of intermediate and advanced skills. This is why some intermediate and advanced athletes does not need to add any kind of additional abs exercises.

TOES TO BAR

You can think of this exercise as one of the best ways to get great abs muscles. It mainly focuses on your lower part of abs and can get you this nice look (only if you follow diet though). Hang in a hollow body position on a pull up bar, retract and depress your scapulas and in a controlled movement raise your legs until your feet touch the bar and then lower them slowly. Try to keep your back straight and do not bend it to make the exercise easier. This exercise also engages your hip flexors during the first part of the movement, by then your core works only as a stabilizer! This is why it is especially important to go over 90 degree and control the eccentrics because this part of exercise will engage your abs the most.

Windshield wipers

I consider hanging version here. They put a great deal of stress on your oblique muscles (good preparation for human flag). Start by hanging from the bar, but contrary to the previous exercise, pull your back up so it is parallel to the ground whilst keeping arms straight. Angle between your legs and torso should be 90 degrees. Keep it strict and rotate your torso so your legs are parallel to the ground on both sides, one after another.

PLANK

This will be your staple. Plank is a static movement in which you keep your body straight (as a plank) on your elbows in a hollow body position and head neutral. It puts pressure on your core and abs muscles. The longer you can keep it the better but remember about perfect form. There are many variations of this exercise to make it either easier or harder. The further your elbows are from your chest, the harder it gets. You can also try doing plank on your knees if you are a beginner. Keep in mind that this exercise is not abs killer but compound core work as stabilizer. For advanced athletes consider doing superman plank – I cover some of these superhuman movements in my Full Body Transformation program.

L-SIT

A great compound exercise. Not only it increases the overall health and strength of some parts of your upper body (shoulders, triceps) but it also makes your core rock-hard. Find dip bars, parallettes or even two chairs and position your hands there. Lock your elbows, keep shoulders down and engage your abs when keeping legs straight. Some easier variations may incorporate only one leg straight and harder move is called a V-sit. You can find tutorial for this movement in my program.

To quickly sum up, remember about engaging your core and keeping hollow back when necessary. Otherwise you may not put pressure on these muscles and you will not build that abs. Having nice shredded abs comes as much with diet as it comes with exercising so keep that in mind. These movements will serve you as a decent foundation in building core/abs.

HOW TO BUILD LEGS WITH CALISTHENICS

Calisthenics aims to develop your whole body. Yes. That means there is more to it than upper body. I guess you do not want chicken legs anyway.

Legs training with your bodyweight can greatly increase explosiveness, dynamic power and endurance of your leg muscles. However, you must be aware that in order to build muscle mass it (i.e. incorporate high resistance exercises) it is advised to use additional weight. If you still want to stay with bodyweight exercises only then the most recommended will be listed below.

Leg muscles is the largest muscle group in our body, this is yet another reason not to omit them during your workouts. Your most basic exercise will be squat and many variations of this move. It can be performed in different stances, on one leg (pistol squat), jumping squats, weighted squats, walks in squat position

(crab walks). Please before attempting doing squats make sure to watch a lot of videos presenting proper form on recommended youtube channels. I watch a lot of people doing this exercise in horrible way. It is way more complicated than people used to think.

SQUATS

They build strength of your muscles that will serve you as a foundation for majority of other leg exercises. The correct technique is as following. Put your heels shoulder width apart with feet aiming 30 degrees out (depending on your body biomechanics it can be a bit less or more, it's individual). Keep your back normally straight. You should touch the ground with the whole area of your feet during the movement. When squatting, knees should point to the direction of your feet, open your hips and stabilize with core work. The full range of motion is performed when you break the parallel of your knees and hips. Squats are great compound exercise and strengthen your muscles and increase health of your overall lower body. To increase explosiveness, you could consider doing jumping squats here I would definitely recommend add some weight as normal jump squats might be too easy. As I said, there are a lot of variations of this exercise and many of these are covered in my Full Body Transformation program so check it out if you are interested.

CALF RAISES

This move focuses primarily on calves. They can be performed on two feet as well as on one foot. Stand with your toes flat on elevated surface and raise your heels. Then go down to the starting position. You need to perform this in a controlled manner and be sure to engage calves to make the most of this exercise. It might be handy to grab some assistance but be sure not to help yourself with hand. Due to anatomy of calves muscle it is recommended to split your routine into sets of 6-12 reps with some additional weight and 15-20 repetitions with less weight added.

LUNGES

One of the another staple movements for your leg workout. This compound move is performed by stepping forward with one of your legs and lowering your hips until the angles between knees are around 90 degrees. During the move keep your back straight and natural. To increase resistance you can think of adding some weight, or perform jumping lunges.

HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL JUMPS

Not only do these exercises increase your strength and explosiveness of your legs but also endurance, general coordination and overall performance of your lower body. That is why I think it is important to perform them. For vertical jumps simply stand straight, jump as high as you can and raise your knees to your chest. For horizontal jumps stand straight, as before, and jump as far as you can.

A word of caution, however, slowly build up your legs performance, always do these exercises after proper warmup and in full range of motion. Nevertheless, they are great movements and will increase overall health of your lower body if performed in a correct way. So do not just disregard leg training but incorporate some movements in your routine!

NUTRITION

If you are working out towards your goal you should eat accordingly. Recall section of hypertrophy training – if you want to gain muscle mass you need to follow a diet that will complement your training schedule. This section is all about it. I have always been reluctant to strict diet plans as they are really hard to stick to and few people actually do it. I myself found it hard. That is why I focus on principles of how to eat that you can incorporate to your everyday diet. Do not rush, it is much better to incorporate these eating habits step by step but being consistent with it rather than being super strict about your diet just for a week or two.

Before you begin

Each of us has different bodies and leads different lifestyles. By eating food our body gets energy to get things done and function properly. Some people eat more, some people eat less. Every person has their

own caloric needs that needs to fulfil to fuel their body. What's the most important – every person has different NEAT (Non-exercise activity thermogenesis) So what now? You need to calculate your own caloric needs. An average healthy male will need around 2500kcal to maintain his physique. Be aware that it is calculated without any work out included, if you're going to work out it will increase even up to over 3300 calories. I covered the detailed process of calculating your own required caloric intake in my Nutrition Guide, but feel free to learn how to do it on your own – there are many resources online. I just covered the best, in my view, method and simplified it so everyone can easily apply it.

YOU CAN GET IT HERE (WWW.CALIATHLETICS.COM)

GAIN MUSCLES

The idea is simple; it all boils down to simple maths.

CALORIES IN > CALORIES OUT

That means you simply have to consume more calories than you burn. in short: eat A LOT. The problem is many people think that they eat enough, but in actual fact they are still below their caloric needs. More specifically: if you want to develop muscle mass, add to your caloric intake extra 200-500 kcal a day.

FOR EXAMPLE: 3000 KCAL (YOUR DAILY CALORIC NEEDS) + 400 KCAL = 3400 KCAL

LOSING BODY FAT

Similar, except reversed principle applies to losing fat. It's simply down to burning more calories than you consume. In order to achieve it, you can either eat less or add physical activity into your daily routine. At first I would recommend that your daily deficit does not exceed 200-500 kcal. Do not rush it from the very beginning.

FOR EXAMPLE: 2500 (YOUR DAILY CALORIC NEEDS) - 400 KCAL = 2100 KCAL

FOOD QUALITY, MICRONUTRIENTS AND WATER

Last step that I decided to touch on is the quality of food in our nutrition.

While you've probably heard your fair share of wise quotes about how living healthy means eating healthy, let's not think about any of them. Let's focus purely on the relation between quality food, shredding weight and building muscles.

Things here are pretty simple. For as long as you keep your calories in check, you could easily get away with eating all sorts of junk food. In the end vitamins and microelements can be supplemented, so that's not a big deal.

Now, that's a great thing to hear, isn't it? Quite frankly, perhaps the only properly valid argument behind quality food, is that it makes you feel full for much longer. It is no rocket science that quality food provides much less calories than junk food, which means you can eat a lot more of it. Not having to walk around hungry all the time certainly makes it helpful if you want to lose some extra kilograms.

What about all the guys who want to bulk up though? Well for those, especially ectomorphs, who struggle to gain weight, junk food is actually a friend. Just imagine. Restricting your diet to chicken with rice, oats and the likes, might not be the best idea. While this sort of food is a great source of energy for your body, the high fibre it contains fills you up for a rather long time. Based on my experience, I can tell you that it's actually advisable to have some "bad food" in your diet every now and then. Not only does it easily deliver required calories, but treating yourself to some pizza helps mentally, right? For as long as you don't let the caloric surplus get out of hand, you will build lean muscle mass.

**SO IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH PUTTING ON WEIGHT,
MY RECOMMENDATION FOR YOU IS TO GO 70% CLEAN 30% DIRTY.**

WHAT NOW? – APPLYING THAT KNOWLEDGE

Okay so you have read and understood everything that I wrote in previous sections. You may be thinking, okay, what to do now? How do I apply that knowledge for my workouts? This, indeed, may seem as a daun-

ting task but do not be overwhelmed. It takes time to get digest everything and learning is a constant process – it does not finish here. Check my website and my programs if you want to see how I applied this knowledge for you already there. But do not worry, I will briefly write how you can do it yourself as well.

What are your goals

Give it a think what do you want to do. Your workout plans will vary depending if you want to learn skills, build muscles or increase muscular endurance. Of course, you develop your body comprehensively through training but only by focusing on certain types of training will you achieve over-average results in that area. Be reasonable about it, do not try to learn how to muscle up if you cannot do a few strict pull ups yet. Build your strength and endurance step by step and focus on developing strong base in the first place.

Choose exercises that will match your goals. If you want to learn skills do preparatory movements and progressions of these exercises. If you want to build strength do weighted exercises or harder variations of basic movements. Consider an example of an athlete who wants to learn how to muscle up. This person should focus on building dynamic strength of a pulling movement. Therefore, exercises such as Australian pull ups or bodyweight rows might not be as useful as high pull ups or explosive pull ups because there is a little overlap between them and muscle up. That being said, choosing a certain way of training typically entails a type of exercises that you will perform.

Decide how many days a week would you like to workout. For the beginners I would recommend Full body workout 3 or 4 times a week. Try to combine previously mentioned exercises into 3 different workout routines. Make sure that during each session you train your whole body not only chest and triceps. You can also decide to train with split routine, it is up to you.

Here you will be able to see how the example week of workout may look like both for beginner and intermediate:

WWW.CALIATHLETICS.COM/SHOP/BUY-MEMBERSHIP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL

HOW DO I DO MORE PULL UPS?

If you have been reading my ebook correctly, you would know by now that in order to increase maximum repetition number you should focus on muscular endurance training. Follow this procedure and focus on your pulling movements.

HOW TO DO A MUSCLE UP?

This is a compound move which involves dynamic pull up move as well as straight bar dip. Firstly, you need to build up strength for it. Practice doing high pull ups and explosive pull ups. Then, try to work on your technique and start with a kipping muscle up.

A full guide on Muscle up is available here:

WWW.CALIATHLETICS.COM/KNOWLEDGE

SHOULD I WORK OUT EVERYDAY?

There is no simple answer on that, it depends on your workout routine and overall workout volume. You should not overtrain yourself and it is easy to do if you train with too high frequency of workouts for same muscle groups. In general, you should not train same muscle group every day with high intensity but it is possible to work out everyday if you mix some trainings with cardio, skills workouts or stretching. You just need to make sure you know your body and know when it has recovered.

NUTRITION

I eat a lot but still cannot gain weight.

You should check if you are eating enough calories with correct nutrients, doing hypertrophy trainings and sleeping decent amount of time. After all, during workout you damage your muscle fibers which are then repaired when you sleep after you fuelled your body with proper intake of food. So make sure you eat a lot, train well (but do not overtrain!) and recover well. How to do it? First of all you should calculate your caloric needs and then add 200-500 calories. You can find out all details here:

WWW.CALIATHLETICS.COM/BUY/NUTRITION-GUIDE

I almost do not eat anything but still cannot lose weight.

Same as above, do you eat below your caloric needs but enough to have metabolism working right?

Remember to stay hydrated and drink a lot of water.

SHOULD I BUY PROTEIN POWDER TO BUILD MUSCLES?

The very first thing you should focus on is your well composed nutrition with caloric surplus or deficit, depending on your goal. As the saying has it, it all starts in the kitchen. Well balanced diet should take care of your protein needs, without having to resort to supplements.

Protein powder may only come in handy if you struggle with eating regular meals, if you are a vegan, or simply allergic to certain products. It really isn't necessary to use it in order to progress muscle growth, but if you really want to add it to your diet, then I would only recommend to take it after the workout in the amount of 30g. It might be easier for some people that doesn't have enough time to cook or simply are too lazy for that.

HOW TO DEAL WITH LACK OF APPETITE?

It may be a problem for a lot of people to increase their daily caloric intake from 2000 to 3000 for example. Even I still struggle with eating enough sometimes. Hopefully there are ways around it. Firstly, let's focus on the products you choose. While quality of food is an important factor, you have to find balance. If you are having a hard time delivering necessary amount of calories a day, then you can cheat a little by including some of the "bad food" to fill in for the missing calories. Also keep in mind that products such as oats, brown rice etc. are high in fiber which controls the blood sugar but also digestion and contributes towards feeling satiety (aka feeling full). Cutting a bit on fiber might help as well.

Secondly, hydration. If you're not drinking enough your appetite will be low. In my case it is best demonstrated right after I wake up. Dehydrated after sleep, I never feel like eating. This is why one of the first things I do is grab a glass of water or orange juice (my favorite) to boost up the appetite.

Thirdly, milkshakes (especially with mixed oats, fruits, seeds and nuts - especially the latter as those are high caloric) are nice way to speed up the digestion and deliver the necessary nutrients in a fairly lightweight form.

CAN I EAT "JUNK FOOD" AND STILL LOSE WEIGHT?

Basically, it's not really the food that makes you obese, but rather the amount of calories you intake. So called junk food is jam-packed with those even in small quantities, so keeping your calories in check might be a problem (also, don't forget about providing right amount of minerals and vitamins). So that leads us to the conclusion many people will be glad to hear: you don't have to give them up entirely. Just remember not to exceed your daily requirement of calories and you will be fine.

I hope you found this E-book useful for you and I could share with you a part of my knowledge that I gained during almost a three years of calisthenics workouts. Remember about the consistency and help us grow Caliathletics project.

THE "Caliathletics E-book"

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