Dumbbell Exercises

The following exercises should be done two to three times per week. Choose a weight that allows you to do 10-15 repetitions (performing the lift 10-15 times in a row). Start with one set and work up to two or three sets. Rest 30-60 seconds between sets.

As you get stronger and the exercise feels easier, lift a heavier weight, add a few more repetitions, or do another set.

**Bicep Curls:** Sit on a chair holding a dumbbell in each hand (palms facing inward or forward). Inhale and raise one or both arms up, bending at the elbow. Exhale as you lower the arm(s). [The pictures on the left show you three different hand positions.]

**Triceps Kickbacks:** Stand with your knees slightly bent, bending forward at the waist, and keeping your back flat. Press your upper arm against your side. Bend your arm at a 90-degree angle. Inhale as you straighten your arm and exhale as you return the elbow to the 90-degree angle.

**Shoulder – Front Raises and Lateral Press:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart—standing up straight, abdominals pulled in, hips tucked under. Hold the dumbbells with your palms facing down. Inhale as you raise the dumbbells to shoulder level (to the front or sides – see the picture examples) and exhale as you lower back to starting position. These exercises can be performed alternating one arm and then the other, or both arms together.

Shoulder Press:  Sit on a chair or bench with your back straight. Grasp two dumbbells with an overhand grip and lift them to your shoulders. Inhale and press your arms straight up and exhale as you lower the arms back to your shoulders. [Palms can face in towards each other or face forward.]

One-Arm Dumbbell Rows (Back): Grasp one dumbbell with your palm facing in. Rest the opposite hand and knee on a bench, stool, or seat. Keep a straight back, steady your upper body, inhale and pull the dumbbell towards your rib cage. Keep your shoulder down and elbow in close to the body. Exhale as you straighten the arm and lower the weight.

Chest Press: Lie flat on the floor (or on a bench) with your feet on the floor (or on the bench). Hold a dumbbell in each hand with your palms facing your knees and arms extended upward. Inhale and lower the dumbbells to chest level. Exhale as you press the dumbbells back up.

Leg Extensions (Quadriceps): Sit on a chair or stool with your back straight. The chair should be high enough that your knees can bend at a 90 degree angle; your feet may or may not touch the floor. Place the head of one dumbbell between your feet. Grasp the edges of the seat to steady your body throughout the movement. Inhale and raise your legs until they are almost parallel to the floor. Exhale as you lower back down.

Lying Leg Curls (Hamstrings): Lie face down on the floor or on a bench. Place the head of a dumbbell between your feet. Inhale as you raise your feet upward until your knees are as fully bent as possible. Exhale as you slowly return your feet to the starting position.

Dumbbell Squats: Stand with your feet slightly apart, holding a dumbbell in each hand with your arms hanging down at your sides. Pull in your abdominals (tummy), look straight ahead, inhale, slightly arch your back, and squat down. As you squat down push you hips behind you like you are sitting in a chair and keep your weight in your heels. Lower down to a comfortable level (working to eventually get your thighs parallel with the floor). Exhale as you straighten your legs to return to standing position.

Lunges: Stand with your feet hip-width apart, holding a dumbbell in each hand with your arms hanging down at your sides. Inhale as you take a comfortable step forward, keeping your upper body as upright as possible. Put all of the weight in your leading leg and lunge down, making sure the leading knee does not extend over its toe. Lunge down until the top of your leading thigh is parallel with the floor. Exhale and push off the leading leg to return to starting position. Repeat with the opposite leg leading.

Abdominal Cruncnches: Lie on your back with your hands loosely behind your head. Bend your hips and knees to 90 degree angles. Inhale and lift your shoulders off the floor, moving your knees closer to your head by shortening your torso. Keep your abs pulled in tight. Exhale as you lower back down.