Training for busy people

Functional compound moves for efficient total body workouts

By Manuela Ioana Nemes

When it comes to busy schedules and strength training, some of the most time-efficient exercises are the compound and bodyweight exercises. They recruit several muscle groups and add intensity to the workouts and they involve more than one joint movement. This type of weightlifting will give an extra calorie-burn. Compound movements are often more functional, using core muscles, improving balance and coordination. They prepare the body the way it actually moves on a daily basis.

In day-to-day life, we perform a wide range of movement activities, such as walking, jogging, jumping, lifting, pushing, pulling, bending, twisting, turning, standing, starting, stopping, climbing and lunging. All of these activities involve smooth, rhythmic motions in the three cardinal planes of movement: sagittal, frontal and transverse.

In functional training, it is as critical to train the specific movement as it is to train the muscles involved in the movement. The brain, which controls muscular movement, thinks in terms of whole motions, not individual muscles. It enhances the coordinated working relationship between the nervous and muscular systems. The benefits may arise from the use of training that emphasises the body's natural ability to move in six degrees of freedom. The primary goal of functional training is to transfer the improvements in strength achieved in one movement to enhancing the performance of another movement by affecting the entire neuromuscular system.

In comparison, though machines appear to be safer to use, they restrict movements to a single plane of motion, which is an unnatural form of movement. However they allow an individual to more safely and effectively participate in functional-training activities later on and also reduce the risk of injury. They can play a critical role in helping to strengthen a "weak link" that a person may have, to restore proper muscle balance. Individuals shouldn't rely on any single type of exercises. Therefore functional strength training should serve as a supplement to traditional strength training, not as a replacement.

In the next few issues, I am going to demonstrate compound exercises that are functional and fun.

Jan Tomkins, one of my busy clients, likes to incorporate compound moves in her workouts to make sure she gets a total body workout in no time, while keeping her heart rate elevated to increase her cardiovascular capacity and burn fat.

For questions or information on training and healthy lifestyle please contact Body Sculptor Fitness Centre at Mirco Centre, Tel: 939 5288 or bodyscul@weststartv.com

Manuela Ioana Nemes, Body Sculptor Fitness Center ACE Certified Personal Trainer, Lifestyle & Weight Management Consultant Vinyasa Specialist & Mat Pilates Instructor

Alternate back lunge with triceps kick back

Stand with feet hip width apart and step back with one foot into a lunge. At the same time slightly bend over, so that your chest and arms are almost parallel with the floor; bend and extend your arms from the elbow at the same time you alternate the back lunge. The shoulders remain still. Primary muscles worked are the triceps and legs assisted by core muscles to keep the balance. Beginners can perform the triceps kick back without stepping into a lunge or keep a stationary lunge changing legs on the next set. Try performing 2-3 sets of 12-15 repetitions.

Modified side plank with overhead pull and side crunch

Start in a modified side plank position, with one knee on the floor and the same arm of support on the floor with hand right under the shoulder; the other leg is extended with toes touching the floor, while the other arm is extended overhead holding a small dumbell with palm facing out. At the same time bend the knee and the elbow together while pulling the dumbell down; the elbow and knee approach in a side crunch motion. Primary muscles worked are the shoulders, oblique muscles assisted by legs and the rest of the core muscles. Beginners can perform the exercise without a dumbell. Try performing 10-15 repetitions on each side, two to three sets.

Single leg bridge with fly

Lie on a mat with knees bent and arms slightly arched holding a dumbell on each side; lift one leg of the floor. Start performing a fly with the arms while keeping the elbows soft without bending them. At the same time lift the hips of the floor and lower them without touching the floor. Beginners can have both feet on the ground while lifting the hips or rest the hips on the floor in between repetitions. You can try performing two to three sets of 12-15 repetitions. Primary muscles working are the buttocks and chest assisted by core, arms and leg muscles.

Lying barbell pull up

Lie on the floor with your chest underneath the barbell of a squat rack; grip the bar with palms facing down and wider than shoulders' width. Lift yourself bringing the chest closer to the barbell while keeping the body straight and the core engaged. Beginners can bend their knees or rest in between repetitions. You can try performing two to three sets of 10 repetitions. Primary muscles working are the back muscles assisted by the core muscles and arms.
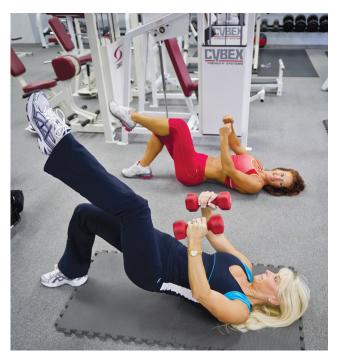

Half boat pose with biceps curl

Sit on a mat at a 45 degree angle holding a dumbell on each side. Start performing a biceps curl while bending the arm from the elbow and lowering it in a full range of motion; at the same time lift the feet off the mat and keep them in the air a few inches from the mat. Primary muscles working are the biceps and the core muscles. Beginners can try holding the feet on the mat or alternating by lifting one foot only.

Sickle Cell Support Group meeting

A Sickle Cell Support Group meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 6 December at 7:30 p.m. at the Health Services Authority's Public Health Waiting Room. General Practice Coordinator Dr Anna Matthews will lead the discussion. All are invited. For further information, contact Genetics Coordinator Joy Merren at 244-2630 or email joy.merren@hsa.ky.