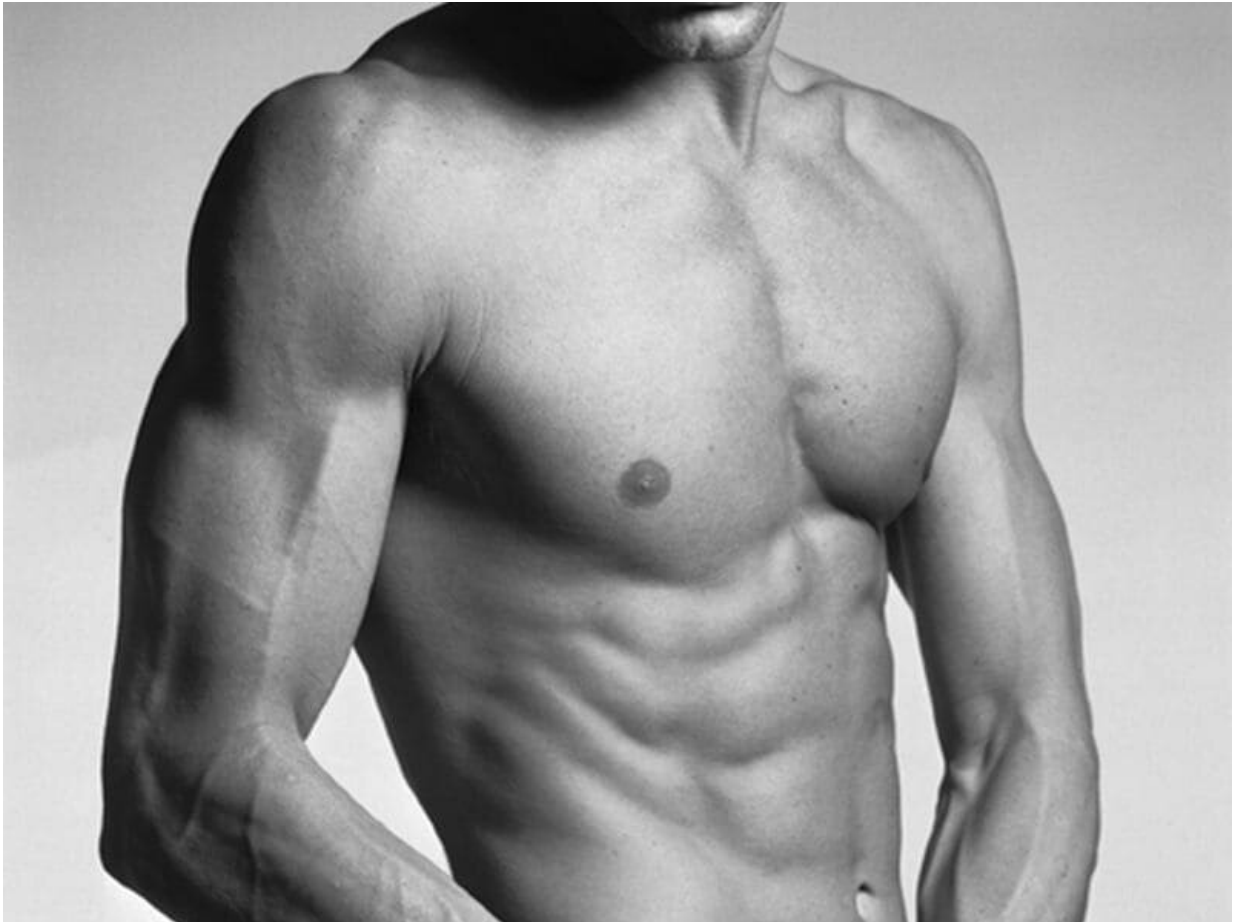


# Exercises to build your upper body strength

February 19 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter

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(HealthDay)—Upper body strength is important at every age, but you don't need to be a bodybuilder to benefit from working your pectoral, or chest, muscles.

For a study sponsored by the American Council on Exercise, scientists from the University of Wisconsin La Crosse evaluated nine popular pec exercises to determine which ones best engaged these muscles.

### **Popular Pec Strength-Training Exercises**

- Barbell bench press
- Pec dec machine
- Bent-forward cable crossover
- Chest press machine
- Inclined dumbbell flys
- Dips
- Push-ups

To develop [muscle](#) size, the barbell bench press is at the very top of the list, followed closely by the pec deck machine and the bent-forward cable crossover. Here's how to perform the barbell bench press.

Lie with your back flat on a weight bench. Knees are bent at the far end of the bench with feet flat on the floor. Grip the barbell with both hands, placing them slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Elbows make a 90-degree angle. With control, lower the bar so that it's just barely touching your chest, then [press](#) upward as you extend your arms. Hold briefly and, again with control, slowly lower the barbell to your chest for one complete rep. Repeat for the appropriate number of reps, typically up to 15 with a lighter weight, up to eight with a heavier weight.

To protect against injury to your shoulders, focus on [proper form](#)—keep forearms in the vertical plane so your elbows are always in line with your wrists.

The researchers also found that if your goal is general fitness rather than specific pec development and/or you don't have time to work them

individually, it's fine to consider exercises like push-ups and dips that target multiple muscles. These exercises still work [chest](#) muscles, but to a lesser degree.

**More information:** The American Council on Exercise has an online library of [pec exercises](#) for every level of experience.

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