



## **Arms Race**

*By Joe Stein, President*



Let's talk arms procurement. In a few weeks it will be the unofficial start of summer, the season of short sleeves and no sleeves. Nothing says you are ready for the beach better than a pair of nicely defined arms. Whether you desire big guns or gently sculpted limbs, having strong arms is more than a fashion statement. They embody form following function. After all, your arms and hands connect you to the rest of the tactile world.

Everything you grasp, push, pull, lift, swing and throw involves your arms. Strong upper arm muscles help stabilize the head of the humerus in the shoulder joint, thus reducing the chance of dislocations and fractures.

### All in the Wrist

Since the wrist is often the site of osteoporosis, developing strong bones and muscles in the lower arm is important, especially for women. Strengthening the wrist extensors and flexors will benefit anyone who uses a computer or swings a bat, racquet or club. I particularly like a device called a wrist roller to exercise these muscles. A foot-long dowel with a weight on the end of a rope which is hung from its center looks benign when not in use. Once the dowel is rotated by the hands, and the weight is reeled up and down a few times, the small but important muscles in the forearm will fatigue. Depending on the weight and repetitions, the resultant burn can range from warm glow to nuclear meltdown.

### Show vs. Go Muscles

Many people want large and highly defined biceps, aka "Big Guns." Just about everyone knows how to do biceps curls with barbells, dumbbells or an exercise machine. Biceps are great "show" muscles because they are highly visible in the front of the arm. The back of the arm holds a three-headed muscle called the triceps. Since this muscle group is not as visible, it is often underdeveloped. Since triceps contain three-fifths of the upper arm compartment, they should be proportionally bigger than the biceps. Triceps get no respect. Too bad because tight triceps help to prevent the dreaded flap of underarm skin from waving in the breeze. Doing bench dips, French press, triceps kickbacks, and other forms of elbow extension exercises can firm up the sagging.

### Winning the Arms Race

The development of your arms should be integrated into a whole-body approach which emphasizes core stability and large muscle groups. There are many exercises which incorporate the arms as part of an integrated chain. For example, push-ups work the chest, front of shoulders and triceps. One arm rows work back, back of shoulders and biceps. When you exercise the larger muscle groups in an integrated fashion, you are burning far more calories than when working the biceps and triceps alone. If you would like a list of the top ten arm exercises, please contact me at the number below. A

coordinated attack on reducing flab and increasing definition is the only way to win the arms race.

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