

# Shoulder Injury Prevention

By Troy Pearsall

I don't care how strong you are or how many years you have been lifting weight. If you lift heavy and do not employ sound technique doing the movements you will eventually get a shoulder injuries, its just the nature of the game.

The sad thing about working shoulders for bodybuilders is the very exercises that can cause the most injury work the best for building muscle. This means that many bodybuilders are torn ( no pun intended) between great results and the possibility of injury. For many especially the younger lifters the idea of large full muscle outweigh the probability of injury.

The two most common things that lifters do while exercising that can cause injury to their joints and muscles are; performing an un-natural stretch during and movement and the second is putting a joint in an un-natural position. Notice the word un-natural is the focus here. When a movement seems to hurt or feel weird while doing it, even if you are using no weight at all then that is an indicator that you should not be doing that movement. Our body for the most part knows what is right for us even better than we do.

Now I want to make sure you understand the different between a difficult movement and an un-natural movement. Heavy Squats are difficult behind the neck shoulder presses are un-natural! Let me expand on this for a moment. Sit in a chair with your palms facing down on your knees. Now while keeping your elbows at your side rotates your forearms up and rearward so that your palms are facing forward and the back of your hand backward. Now continue to rotate your palms rearward until the palms are facing slightly up and are position behind your shoulders. Think about how that feels, because that un-natural position is the correct position for doing behind the neck shoulder presses.

So now that understand what an unnatural position feels like lets address the main four culprits of shoulder injury. Ok here are the bad guys;

## **The first is the dumbbell fly**

By keeping the elbows straight and over stretching at the bottom of the movement you are putting you shoulder in an un-natural position and possibly causing shoulder injury.

The correct way to do this movement is to bend at the elbow, like your hugging a fat girl ( what? Fat Girls need loving too) and remember to bring arms down only to the point where the elbow is level with the center of your rib cage.

## **The behind the neck shoulder press**

This feels un-natural don't it? That because in order to get enough range of motion to grow you have to put your shoulder in a compromising position for injury

The correct way is to drop this exercise all together, and replace it with front of neck shoulder presses. When doing shoulder presses to the front push all the way up just before lock out and come down only until the elbows are slightly below parallel with the floor. For most people that puts the bar just at eye level at the bottom of the movement. Any more can cause lower back problems.

### **The Lat pull down to the back of the neck**

This is one that I only see women do for some reason. Once again it don't even feel natural, does it?

The correct way to do this is to arch your lower back ever so slightly, and using a shoulder width or less grip pull the bar down until it touches the bottom of your chest (pec). I see guys in the gym come only down until it is eye level; I really believe that either way is correct. However the lats will get a better contraction when the bar touches the chest!

### **The last exercise is the pull up**

This particular exercise has two different incorrect variations. The first is to pull to the back of the neck. I think I stressed the problem with any exercise going to the back of the neck already.

The second incorrect variation to the pull up is to select too wide a grip. For some reason many people believe that the wider the grip the wider the back muscles. I don't have time to go into the function of the muscles, but understand, if you want to build a big wide back you are more likely to do so with narrow and medium grip pull ups then you will with wide.

The correct way to this is to either grip the bar with a shoulder width grip and pull you body up until the chest meet the bar, or use a "V-Bar" or chinning triangle over the pull-up bar and pull upward until your chest touches the chinning triangle.

If you have never had any shoulder problems this will help you avoid them altogether. If you've had them (shoulder injuries) in the past following these simple changes will avoid future injury, and help you to get the most out of your workouts.