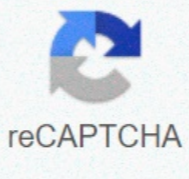




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## Best back and bicep workout at home

Big biceps signal to the world that you've put in some serious sweat equity at the gym. The biceps are a small muscle, but to grow them takes time, knowledge, and intellectual programming. Also, your biceps flex your elbow — which, when you think about it, is a pretty important job. Otherwise, how would you curl that beer (ahem, protein shake) to your lips or pick your kid up? The biceps don't just look good; they serve a real function. The good news for you is training the biceps is pretty simple — you curl, curl, and curl some more. That said, certain exercises get the job done better than others. To help you figure out which is best for you, we've culled the eight best biceps exercises onto one list along with some more info on the muscle itself and how to incorporate biceps training into your routine. **Best Biceps Exercises** [Related: Don't forget these 10 commandments of biceps training] The barbell curl is a classic biceps-builder. When done correctly, this exercise targets the biceps and can add serious size and strength to the entire muscle. You can curl more weight with the barbell curl compared to other curl variations as you're lifting a singular implement with both hands. It's also very easy to do. Simply load up a barbell, hold it in both hands, and lift it up towards your chin. Rinse and repeat. Benefits of the Barbell Curl It's simple and effective. The barbell curl offers a small learning curve, making it perfect for beginners, and more advanced lifters will still benefit from the basic mechanics. You'll build stronger biceps more quickly as you're able to load your biceps with more weight. How to Do the Barbell Curl Grab a barbell with an underhand grip, slightly wider than the shoulders. With the chest up and shoulder blades pulled tightly together, expose the front of your biceps by pulling the shoulders back into the socket. The elbows should reside under the shoulder joint, or slightly in front by the ribs. Curl the barbell up using the biceps, making sure to not let the torso lean forward, shoulder collapse forward, or the elbows slide backward to the side of the body (they should stay slightly in front of the shoulders). The chin-up is a bodyweight exercise that can induce serious muscle growth of the biceps (and back) with nothing but a pull-up bar. If you have a door-mounted pull-up bar in your home gym, then that's all you need to bang out sets of chin-ups. Since the lifter is pulling their own bodyweight, the biceps are usually exposed to loads heavier than what one can lift with a barbell. However, lifters may often perform these incorrectly, engaging their shoulder and grip muscles. Benefits of the Chin-Up To do a chin-up, you only need access to a pull-up bar, making it one of the more accessible movements on this list. The chin-up has you lift your entire bodyweight, taxing the biceps with more weight than one can usually curl. Your grip and shoulders will also gain some strength. How to Do the Chin-Up Hang from a bar with palms facing you and the hands about shoulder-width apart, or slightly wider. From a dead hang, squeeze your shoulder blades together and pull your body up, making sure to not let the body fold inwards (so many people do this) until your chin is at or above the bar. Curling on a preacher bench lengthens the exercise's range of motion. As a result, the biceps will be under tension for a longer period of time, which usually equates to more muscle growth. Using an ez-bar, which turns the hands inwards, makes the move more comfortable on the wrists and shifts the angle of the exercise to target different muscle fibers in the biceps. Benefits of the EZ-Bar Preacher Curl Using the preacher bench creates a longer range of motion and therefore creates more muscular tension for more biceps growth. Using an ez-bar is more comfortable on the wrists. How to Do the EZ-Bar Preacher Curl Sit down on a preacher bench and rest the back of triceps on the pad. Set your body in the same position as the standard barbell biceps curl (chest up, shoulders back, and elbows slightly forward). Grasp the ez-bar handle on the inner angled pieces. This will place your hands slightly narrower than shoulder-width and on a semi-supinated angle. With the body locked in place, curl the bar upwards as you flex the biceps, briefly pausing at the top of the curl to flex the biceps. Lower the weight under control. The hammer curl has the lifter curl dumbbells with their palms facing each other. This neutral wrist position is more comfortable and allows the lifter to hoist more weight, as we're generally stronger with a palms-facing position. This move also targets the biceps brachialis and brachioradialis (outer biceps and forearm) for more arm thickness. Benefits of the Hammer Curl The wrist neutral position is more comfortable. You can lift more weight with the hammer curl. The hammer curl targets the inner biceps muscle and the forearm to build denser arms. How to Do the Hammer Curl Hold a dumbbell in each hand while standing. Turn your wrists so that they're facing each other. Keep your arms tucked in at your sides and flex your elbows to curl the dumbbells up towards your shoulders. Lower them back down with control. To perform the incline dumbbell curl, the lifter needs to lay back onto an incline gym bench. This achieves two things: First, it takes the momentum out of the equation so that the lifter can't cheat the weight up. Secondly, curling with lengthened, extended arms creates a longer range of motion, which ultimately makes this curl variation more effective. Benefits of the Incline Dumbbell Curl The incline dumbbell curl eliminates momentum, forcing the lifter to maintain strict curling form. Lifting with extended arms increases the exercise's range of motion for more muscular tension. How to Do the Incline Dumbbell Curl Lay back on an incline bench, with a dumbbell in each hand. Let your arms hang so they're fully extended. Without moving your shoulders, curl the weight up to your shoulders. Hold the top of the movement for about a second, and then slowly lower the dumbbells with control. You're right to think of this movement as a traditional back exercise. It is. That said, similar to the chin-up, this bent-over row variation involves the biceps to a great degree. You can manage more weight on the barbell compared to other biceps exercises. Also, you'll build up your biceps in conjunction with your back muscles for more overall muscularity. Benefits of the Reverse-Grip Bent-Over Row The reverse-grip bent-over row targets your back muscles in addition to your biceps. You can lift more weight compared to other biceps moves. How to Do the Reverse-Grip Bent-Over Row Grab a barbell with an underhand grip that is about shoulder-width apart. Assume the proper bent over row position, with the back flat and chest up. Row the barbell to the stomach. Pull with both the back and the arms, lowering the weight under control and repeating for reps. When you curl a dumbbell or barbell, the movement is hardest at the midpoint of the lift since the weight is furthest from the body. However, cables keep tension on the muscle throughout the movement, as the weight stack you're lifting is suspended throughout. This adds more tension to the muscle for more growth. You can also attach different handles to a cable machine's pulley to attack your biceps from different angles. [mrbiphoto/Shutterstock](#) Benefits of the Cable Curl Curling with a cable loads the biceps with constant tension throughout the movement. You can target your biceps from different angles by using different handles on the cable machine. How to Do the Cable Curl Attach the desired handle to the pulley of a cable machine set to the lowest height. Grab the handle in both hands and take a few steps back so that there's constant tension on the cable (the weight stack should be elevated the entire time). Curl the bar up to your chest and then slowly lower it back down. The concentration curl is all about feeling your biceps work. You sit down on a bench, rest your elbow on the inside of your thigh, and curl a dumbbell from full extension to contraction. By working on-arm at a time you're doing more work, and so you're burning more calories, and are allowing your weaker arm to play catch up. Also, the isolated curling position really lets you fine in on your biceps as you curl a light dumbbell. Benefits of the Concentration Curl The ability to focus more intently on your biceps. More calories burned as you're working one side of your body at a time, which effectively doubles the number of sets you're doing. By focusing on one arm at a time, your weaker side will get stronger. How to Do the Concentration Curl Sit on a bench with the feet wide to allow your arm to hang in the middle, with your elbow resting on the inside of the thigh. With a dumbbell in hand, slowly curl the dumbbell upward at a controlled tempo, concentrating on contracting the biceps to move the load. At the top of the movement, flex as hard as you can, then slowly lower the load. The key is to not lose tension on the biceps at any point in the range of motion. About the Biceps Muscle The biceps are technically called biceps brachii, which is Latin for "two-headed muscle of the arm." The biceps attach across two joints — the elbow and the shoulder. Its core function is to flex the elbow and turn the wrist. [Iulian Valentin/Shutterstock](#) The biceps are a small muscle, but they serve a pivotal function when you really think about it. Anything you pick something up or get press something overhead, you're flexing your elbow (and therefore your biceps) to some degree. Think about the last time you loaded a suitcase into an overhead compartment. To get your luggage overhead, you probably curled it to your chest before pressing it up. Small but mighty — that's the biceps for you. Aesthetically, the biceps are a coveted muscle. When someone asks you to make a muscle, you don't roll up your pant leg and flex your calf or pull down your shirt collar to show off your traps — you flex your biceps. Many lifters desire that classic biceps peak, which is when the muscle juts upwards. Unfortunately, whether you have a more distinguished biceps peak or not is determined by genetics, but you can grow the area which will translate to a larger peak to some degree. How to Train Your Biceps As for how often to train your biceps, you want to aim to get in about 10 to 14 sets per week. If you're a gym newbie, start with eight sets per week. Again, the biceps are a small muscle with a singular function, and so they don't require a hefty amount of work to spark growth. [Srđjan Randjelovi/Shutterstock](#) We suggest training your biceps with your triceps together as they're antagonistic muscle (your biceps flex the elbow and your triceps extend the elbow). You can also save your biceps training for after your back workout or, if you follow a push, pull, legs split, after your pulling day. Since your biceps are recruited in most upper-body pulling movements, it makes sense to tack them onto that day since they'll already be a bit fatigued. More Biceps Training Tips Now that you've learned about the best biceps exercise, you may want to step up your biceps training even more. Check out these other helpful and informative articles on curling and biceps exercises. [Feature image by mrbiphoto/Shutterstock](#) Although the biceps brachii is a single muscle, it's divided into a long head and a short head. These two sections work together to help move the elbow and with supination, or twisting, your forearm. In a well-developed biceps muscle, both the long head and the short head are clearly visible. The short head adds lots of width to the biceps while the long head adds to the biceps peak. Long head exercises are also referred to as peak exercises. To understand why long head biceps are referred to as biceps peaks, it can be helpful to imagine biceps as being roughly hill-shaped. The short head of the biceps creates the base of the hill and determines how wide it is while the long head creates the rounded shape at the top, just like you would refer to the peak of a mountain. The biceps muscle is worked out incidentally in many back and chest exercises. For that reason, it's not necessary to go all-out with moves that target the long head of the biceps specifically. We'll talk about what kind of workout routine you need, reps requirements, and the 5 best long head biceps exercises in this guide. If you're trying to get huge peaks, this guide is for you. (Note: Want our elite trainers to help you grow your biceps? Start your [Fitplan free trial today!](#)) Dumbbell curls are one of the most common ways to build strong biceps and can be done in several variations. Location and Function of the Long Head Biceps Most people can readily point to their biceps, but that's where common knowledge of the anatomy of the biceps muscle tends to stop. The long head of the biceps is on the inside of your upper arm and the short head is underneath it. You can see a clearly defined line underneath it when you're flexing your biceps assuming you have defined muscle tone there. They form the top of the biceps muscle. These peaks have long been valued in bodybuilding circles because they add more definition to the upper arm. However, the most important function of the long head biceps is to stabilize the round top of the humerus, the upper arm bone, which is why the round top is called the humeral head of the glenoid. The long head of the biceps performs this function in tandem with the brachioradialis whenever there is powerful forearm supination or elbow flexion. [Helpful Hint:](#) Build strength in your biceps and shoulders with our [Bodyweight Power Fitplan!](#) Targeting Long Head and Short Head Biceps If the long head of the biceps is for protecting the shoulder joint, what is the function of the short head of the biceps? The short head also helps with the supination of the forearm and flexion of the elbow joint by supporting the brachialis muscle, which is the prime mover there. The short head works across the bone of the upper arm and largely just helps with the functions of the long head of the biceps that we've already described, like stabilizing the shoulder joint. Since it mostly acts as one muscle with the long head biceps, you might think targeting one or the other is impossible. In fact, many of the exercises that target the large head biceps do work out the short head as well. You can change them slightly to make them target the short head by using a wide grip. Essentially, what you want to do is make sure the long head's ability to stretch is limited. That will target the short head of the biceps and limiting stretching in the short head will target the long head of the biceps. (Note: You can download the [Fitplan App](#) for free on [Google Play!](#)) Common Mistakes with Biceps Peak Exercises Many of the same mistakes are often made by people trying to build bigger biceps. Sometimes this has to do with the organization of their biceps workout plan and other times it's in the execution of individual biceps exercises. Keep an eye out for these mistakes to make sure you're getting the huge peaks you're after. [Lifting Too Much Weight](#) We all want to be Superman at the gym. Partly to show off and partly to get beastly gains, people too frequently take really heavy weight off the rack or use dumbbells and kettlebells that are too heavy for the exercise they're doing. With the concept of hypertrophy in mind, the advice to use less weight might sound counterproductive. For most biceps exercises, though, a high-rep workout with less weight is going to lead to greater gains than fewer reps with a lot of weight will. Too much weight will limit the range of motion of your exercises, rendering them less effective. This is good to keep in mind for your warm-ups as well. If you're going to have biceps curls in your workout routine, why not start with 40 or 50 reps at a low weight? It will help target your long head biceps and prime your shoulders for the rest of the routine to come. **No Focus on Tension** When it comes to building muscle mass, the most important part of an exercise is the part that puts a strain on the targeted muscle. For the biceps, that would be the eccentric part of the movement where the weight is being lowered. If you slow down that section of a biceps curl, for example, you can feel that your biceps brachii are struggling much more than they were on the way up. Using tension the right way is a great way to workout smarter. Rather than exerting all your energy throwing lots of weight around, taking the time to understand what exercises work and what part of those exercises are most effective will help you make the most of your time at the gym. **Don't Aim for Muscle Failure** Fatiguing your biceps muscles before you start your main workout routine can be very effective but don't try to cause complete muscle failure when you're only targeting the biceps. They're very important in many exercises that work the back muscles such as barbell rows and pull-ups, so if you've already exhausted your biceps they'll give out during those other exercises. If you are going to train to failure, you can do some high-rep biceps isolation exercises with isometric pauses at the moment of the highest tension, which is the eccentric downward motion. Don't be surprised if it takes fewer reps than you thought to reach bicep exhaustion, though, especially at the end of an entire workout routine. **Lack of Variation** We've already mentioned how adaptable the human body is. When you don't change things up during your workout routine, your body will become acclimated and that hypertrophy-inducing muscle damage will be lessened. It's very important to do different exercises throughout the week for this same reason. You can also make some changes between exercises in a single workout routine. For example, if your arm workout includes curls, presses, and rows in a single day at the gym, make sure you're changing up your grip style and grip width. Your body will really be on its toes, so to speak, if you keep challenging muscle groups from different directions by experimenting with your grip. **Cheating Too Much** There is a time and place for cheating during bicep curls. At that critical moment where the weight is about halfway up, people tend to add in a swinging motion to help get to the top of the curl. Cheating is a fantastic way to exhaust your biceps beyond full-rep failure but using momentum to get through your curls before that point is really just cheating yourself out of the gains you could be earning. To correct this mistake, limit how much other parts of your body can move. If you're standing up doing barbell curls, put your back up against a wall to prevent using your back to bring the front deltsoids into the mix. During sitting biceps curls, make sure your legs are underneath a pad. [Helpful Hint:](#) Build muscle more cleverly with the compound exercises in our [Train Smart Fitplan!](#) **5 Best Exercises for Huge Peaks and Bigger Arms** Use these moves to get your long head biceps pumped up and improve the overall function of your upper arms. **1. Incline Dumbbell Curls** Dumbbell curls are a really easy dumbbell exercise to do and they don't require much equipment at all. This incline variation is similarly simple but does require a seat with an inclined back. Other than that, the movement is the same as a traditional dumbbell curl. To get into the starting position, lean back on the seat with a dumbbell in each hand. Your arms should be completely straight and your palms should be facing out. (Tip: If you want to target the short head of the biceps, turn your wrists toward your body in the starting position.) Lift the dumbbells up toward your elbows and then very slowly let them back down to the starting position. For a real burn, add in an isometric pause at the top of the move. To change things up, try reverse curls on odd days. **2. Hammer Curls** Although you might think hammer curls are doing the same work as an incline dumbbell curl, they actually target the brachialis and long head of the biceps even more. If you're trying to get huge peaks, hammer curls should be in your workout routine. You can also add variation to your workout by alternating between incline dumbbell curls and hammer curls on different days of the week. You can do this move sitting down on a bench or you can stand against a wall. All you have to do is pick up a dumbbell, by the side weight rather than in the middle, in each hand. Slowly lift the weights up to your shoulders and let them back down. You can add an isometric pause just after the top of the movement. **3. Chin-Ups** Chin-ups are a great compound exercise that will help you increase your grip strength and give you a chest, back, and shoulder workout while you hit arm muscles like the biceps and triceps too. You'll need a stable horizontal bar that will support your body weight without issue. Unlike pull-ups, chin-ups use an underhand grip to cause activation in different muscles. For this reason, you can alternate between the two for some variety in your workout routine. Get a good underhand grip on the chin-up bar and get into a dead hang position with your feet off the ground. Lift yourself by pulling the bar down through your elbows until your chin is just above the bar. If you're feeling adventurous, add an isometric pause above the bar and let yourself down slowly. Use a close grip to target your long head biceps even more. **4. Preacher Curls** To do this move, you'll need a preacher bench that will help restrict movement in your legs and back so that your biceps brachii get all the attention and you can get big arms even faster. You can use an EZ bar or a barbell to do preacher curls. To get into the starting position, sit on the preacher bench with your armpits resting on the upper sloped section. Get an underhand grip on the bar with your arms fully extended and resting on the bench. Bring the bar up until your arms are horizontal with your body and slowly return toward the starting position. Pause halfway down for an isometric strain. [Helpful Hint:](#) Learn more dumbbell moves during our [Dumbbells at Home Fitplan!](#) Cable curls are great for building upward resistance and strengthening the bicep. **5. Cable Curls** You'll need a cable machine to do cable curls but they're some of the best biceps exercises because they put up resistance throughout the entire move. This is mostly an isolation exercise although some stabilizing muscles will come into play somewhat. To get into the starting position, stand in front of a cable machine with your feet firmly on the ground about hip-width apart from each other. Brace your core and make sure your head and back don't move. You can get an overhead or an underhand grip on the cable machine handles, but the underhand targets the biceps brachii more. Bring the handles up toward your shoulders and then slowly back down to the starting position. To ensure that your biceps are kept under tension, don't let the weight plates get back to the stack. Keep them elevated throughout your reps. **Conclusion** Throwing one of these five long head biceps exercises into your normal workout routine will help build up the peaks of your biceps and give you more impressive upper arms. It will also help protect the long head tendon and prevent a potentially serious shoulder injury. Many bodybuilders who are trying to get mountainous biceps are trying the wrong exercises because they don't understand how the biceps are shaped or which biceps target the long head of the biceps. Even more commonly, people fail to build muscle in their upper arm even when they spend a long time at the gym because they aren't varying their exercises enough. The human body adapts and if it becomes accustomed to a biceps exercise then the biceps won't be damaged and hypertrophy won't kick in. Larger biceps peaks aren't only for appearances. Building strength in the long head biceps can also prevent serious and painful shoulder injuries. Both the short head and the long head of the biceps are attached to bone in the shoulder joint via tendons, appropriately called the long head tendon and short head tendon, respectively. While the short head tendon attaches at the front of the shoulder and rarely causes any problems, the long head tendon attaches at the top of the shoulder socket and that tendon can tear if it's not well-protected by a large long head biceps muscle. That overworking is unfortunately common for people who use high-intensity workout routines to get bigger biceps. If you try biceps exercises without the proper form, do them too quickly, or fail to warm-up the shoulder adequately before beginning, that long head tendon can snap. In extreme cases, your bicep can become completely unattached and slump down toward the upper arm. Although these types of injuries typically repair themselves within a few weeks, they are very painful and you're not going to be able to do any biceps curls or very likely any other upper body exercise until it's healed. You're also more prone to a recurrence of this type of injury if it's happened to you before. Like any other muscle, the biceps works better when you build strength there. Better biceps function will translate to better flexion at the elbow joint and a more secure shoulder joint as well. All these upper body muscle groups are connected - a strong and functioning shoulder joint will help you do exercises that build large back and chest muscles. The 5 biceps exercises are isolation exercises. If you want more gains elsewhere in the upper body, pair them with classic moves like the deadlift or bench press. There are many other variations of biceps curls, such as drag curls and concentration curls, that also work well. While these 5 biceps exercises target the long head of the bicep most effectively, the other curl variants will also beef up your arms. Don't be afraid to throw them into your workout routine alongside the exercises in this guide. (Note: Want our elite, celebrity trainers to help you get the arms of your dreams? Start your [Fitplan free trial today!](#))

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