

Pullovers

by

Alan Palmieri

Pullovers, ooooooh honey, love ‘em, each and every kind and each and every way you can think of performing them; Stiff arm barbell, bent arm barbell, E-Z curl bar, dumbbell, cable, flat bench, moon bench, decline, cross bench, you name it and I love them. You can use them, and I have, during chest workouts, back workouts, and even with leg workouts. I’ve done them when I’ve done nothing else in a workout.

Not being a scientist or a doctor I can’t make any claims other than my personal opinion or those made based upon my own experiences. I know that years back some claimed pullovers would not help increase the overall size of the ribcage once a person reached a mature age of around twenty. Supposedly that is when the cartilage and bones became more ridged and lost their ability to be formed or maybe I should say transformed or altered. Sounds like a logical theory and on the surface makes sense, in fact it may actually be true. I don’t know of any actual studies that have been performed to verify that position but I do not believe it. Even if there is documented proof it is correct I can categorically state it is not true in every instance and I offer myself as an example. I do believe it takes more work, effort and time to expand the ribcage after a person reaches a certain age but I still believe pullovers can and do expand the ribcage.

Just as dips and chins can work a variety of muscles I believe the same is true for pullovers. Pullovers work a variety of muscles, primarily; lats, serratus, pecs, ribcage, and lungs. A lot depends on just how you perform the movement as to which muscles will receive the most direct impact. I’ve used them at one time or another in all the workouts as I’ve mentioned. I do however have one body part I especially like to incorporate pullovers in – chest workouts. I will use it as a super-set with a chest exercise or alone as

a finishing movement at the conclusion of a chest workout. I love the way they stretch the muscles and fill the lungs. Regardless of the manner in which I perform pullovers one aspect remains constant, I perform d-e-e-p breathing pullovers, no shallow short breaths... it makes a difference, a *BIG* difference!

My favorite is the across the bench dumbbell pullover. I like to insert it as my final chest movement for about five sets of twelve to fifteen reps. I will pyramid up each set although I have often kept the same weight for all sets. Typical Palmieri fashion of doing what feels right on a particular day instead of trying to follow a ridged plan that allows no flexibility. Its funny how my life is regimented from the time I get up until I hit the sack. In fact, I do all I can to keep flexibility out of my life yet when it comes to my workouts I feel the need to follow what my body and mind are telling me. Maybe I should adopt my workout life into my personal life... perhaps it would run smoother. Back to the pullovers –

I will lie with only the upper back and traps resting sideways across a flat bench, feet together with hips and buttocks down low. I keep my feet back under my buttocks. I hold a dumbbell arms length above my face making certain not to lock the elbows, I keep them slightly bent and perform the movement in a semi straight arm fashion. Inhale as deep as possible while at the same time lowering the dumbbell behind the head. I bring the dumbbell back up while exhaling and concentrating on the chest and serratus muscles to return the dumbbell to the starting position. The important part of the movement for me is in the breathing. I control my inhaling and exhaling. I do not use short fast breaths; I inhale deeply through the mouth and keep inhaling until the dumbbell is in the lowest position behind my head. I then exhale from the mouth as I return the dumbbell to the starting position and the last bit of air is exhaled just as I return to the starting position. I do not hold my breath at any time during the movement.

I use a weight that I feel comfortable with and don't try to muscle the movement. By this I mean I don't cheat or jerk the weight. I used a fluid motion and go all the way back, as far as I can. The only time I will power a pullover is if I am performing bent arm

barbell pullovers, then I load the bar up and really get into it however, even then I am careful not to overextend the joints of the shoulders and I still use rhythm and fluid movements with deep breaths on each rep.

Sometimes for variation I will take two or three deep breaths between reps and this can be extremely invigorating. Caution needs to be followed however, as this will really rush blood to the brain and can cause dizziness and may result in some passing out which wouldn't be very smart if you're holding a heavy dumbbell over your head. Heck it wouldn't be smart if you were holding a light dumbbell over your head.

I get a completed feeling after finishing a chest workout with pullovers. It makes me want to stand more erect and my chest feels full, stretched, and flushed. The best pump of the entire upper body I can experience comes after a good chest workout finished off with pullovers.

I could not only feel but see results from pullovers in my training regardless of my age. I believe they, as any exercise on any body part, can and do produce results and I also believe they can help shape and expand a person's ribcage regardless of their age. Even if they didn't for me I would still use them simply because they are of such benefit and besides... I love 'em.

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