



HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BUILD MUSCLE



GET FIT
Today *Putting the Fun
Back into Fitness*

Okay, it's been a week since you started training, and you still don't have that 18-inch, bulgy bicep peak that you started with a vision for.

Often, you seek out the latest and best training tips to help you smash your goals, and you become so obsessed with the time it's going to take that your focus actually shifts from what matters.

That is, actually building the muscle.

And well, if those couple of sentences hit home, you are in the right place because we're about to reveal how long it actually takes to build quality muscle mass as a natural athlete.

Besides, we will also give you practical tips to use in your workouts for the goal of reaching your objectives in a straight line, without making mistakes.

Before we get to that part, however, you have to learn what muscle building actually is and why it happens.

HOW DO MUSCLES GROW & WHY?

Now basically, building muscle literally means that you will be stacking slabs of meat on your skeleton. With this in mind now, take a common goal.

Take, say, the goal of adding '10 lbs of muscle in 2 months' and imagine 10 lbs of meat.

If you buy meat at the butcher's regularly, you know how two pounds look like - MASSIVE.

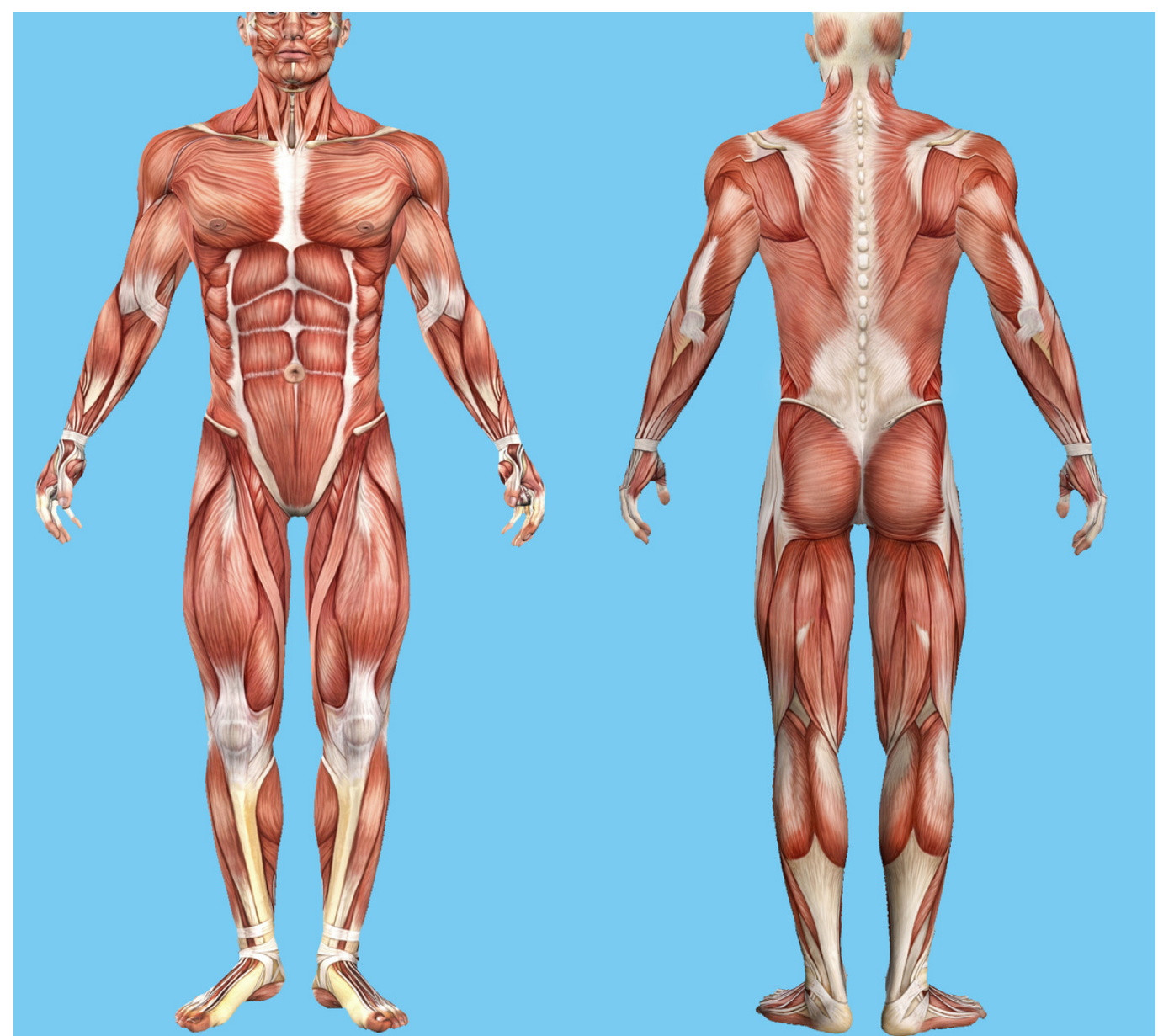
Now, 5x that and consider your body has to create this naturally in 2 months...

Yeah. No. Quite unlikely.

Nevertheless, that shouldn't discourage you because quality is what matters the most in the context of building muscle.

But why do muscles grow?

Well, the answer is simple - The human body follows the laws of evolution, and therefore, any change in the stimulus of the environment will lead to adaptations.



Adaptations are basically the processes that occur for the betterment of an organism in various aspects.

In this case, this means getting bigger and stronger - the muscles' capacity for work and rate of force production increase, as it experiences previously unknown loads.

WHAT MAKES OR BREAKS GROWTH?

It is believed that the biggest factor for muscle growth is the total amount of weight lifted (known as ‘volume’)

Volume is the weight times the number of sets, times the number of reps.

So, for example, if you lift 100 kg in 1 set of 3 reps, that would yield a volume of 300 kg.

Besides volume, though, there is the factor we know as ‘training intensity.’

Training intensity increases or decreases the closer or further, we get to and from our maximum strength capabilities.

In simpler words, the more weight you put on the bar, the higher the intensity, up until the point where you use a weight you can only lift for one repetition and fail to do a second rep unassisted - This represents 100% intensity for you, for that exercise.



Now, this is an important thing to consider because this represents the “challenge” factor.

The more intense (heavy) the workout, the more stimulus goes to the fast-twitch muscle fibers, which are activated at heavier loads.

But that doesn’t really mean you should train at 90-100% intensity all the time.

In fact, such peak intensity leads to a lesser ability to do more repetitions, thus robbing you of volume. And, in the context of muscle growth, you want the highest amount of quality volume possible.



That means training at an intensity that is quite challenging but still allows you to do 6+ repetitions.

This is how you can realize the highest amount of quality volume possible because really, really heavy weights are quite strenuous and lead to diminished performance (fewer reps/sets) quicker.

So What is The Optimal Intensity?

Alright, so you just learned that intensity is important, but at one point, it makes it way harder to realize a higher training volume.

This brings a question to mind - What is the optimal training intensity for the goal of building muscle, then?

Well, the answer is - About 70-85% of your maximum strength capabilities.

At that intensity range, you'd be able to complete a pretty challenging 6-12 repetitions, close to failure.

So basically, if you can lift 100 kg for one rep and fail to do a second unassisted (100% intensity), well, then use 70-85 kg (70-85% intensity) for your working sets and do 6-12 repetitions.



Summary: The body grows muscle to adapt to the heavy, previously unknown loads and get stronger. To grow the most amount of muscle, you have to consistently realize the highest quality training volume possible by doing challenging sets of 6-12 repetitions.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE, THOUGH?

Alright, you've been training hard, tracking your rest times, utilizing high intensity and high repetitions, so when is your bicep peak going to show up? The answer is - It depends!

First, we have the training factors, but then we also have the genetic factors, or in other words, how you respond to training stimuli. This is why we can't give you a precise answer to the question - There are just too many factors to consider.

However, most beginners gain about 10-15 lbs in their first year, and with each following year, that amount is halved. However, it is important to consider that muscle building is a constant process, and there are minor changes that happen every single day.

Because you see yourself every day, however, those changes are hardly visible. Nevertheless, as you stay consistent with your workouts and look back at your past months' selfies, you'll come to find that you have made quite some gains!

So again, note that gains don't suddenly occur. Instead, they stack up over time until a point where they are actually visual.

In order for this to happen, you don't just have to 'workout for three years'. You have to workout for three years **CONSISTENTLY**, because the time spent training isn't the only important factor.

There's also the factor of **HOW** you train that will make the most difference.

Keep in mind that sculpting an aesthetic physique won't happen with random bursts of motivation and heavy workouts.

You have to nail your training intensity, your volume, your rest times between sets, your recovery windows between workouts, your nutrition, sleep, etc.

Sounds difficult? Yes, it actually is!

However, there is a stage in training when you don't really have to pay that much attention to all of this.

So beginners, hear me out before we get to the part of this book where we give you actionable tips.

THE NEWBIE GAINS

One of the things that make progress most prominently visible is the newbie gains phase.

This is basically when a trainee first gets in the gym and starts doing whatever. That same whatever leads to massive, quick spurs of progress that happen in little to no time.

The newbie gains phase is especially prominent in skinny individuals, who have little to no fat to cover their gains. And well, when you first start training, everything is new and exciting. You make progress quickly and feel like you can do anything.

But as with all things, this phase eventually ends. It's kind of like the honeymoon period of a relationship.

After that, progress slows down and becomes harder to come by. This is natural and doesn't mean that you're doing anything wrong.

It simply means that you've reached a point where you need to start working harder if you want to continue making progress. It means that you have to focus on the things we mentioned above.

So hey, if you are past the newbie gains phase, keep reading as we give you our best tips to continue smashing your workouts and make amazing progress as time goes by!



#1 Progressive Overload

When it comes to muscle growth, the primary principle to go by is what we refer to as “progressive overload.”

If you remember, at the beginning of this book, we mentioned that muscle growth is a result of adapting to previously unknown stimuli.

And well, this is always valid, meaning that these unknown stimuli that the body hasn’t experienced before have to keep coming! This is known as “progressive overload” and implies progressively increasing the load placed upon your body’s muscles.

To realize this important principle, there are a couple of options:



To realize this important principle, there are a couple of options:

1. Increase training weight
2. Increase number of sets
3. Increase the number of repetitions
4. Increase the time under tension

Generally speaking, you should still follow the main principle, which is to aim for the highest amount of quality volume possible.

What this means is that if you are increasing weight but cutting down 5 reps as a cost of that increase, do a lesser increase to do more reps!

#2 Training Frequency

Now, increasing training frequency is another way to realize progressive overload, but we want to touch on this in detail, which is why we put it in a separate heading.

Basically, as you advance and your training volume starts going up, you will reach a point where you do 10+ working sets per muscle group in a single workout.

However, if those sets are of proper intensity, the odds are that after the 5-6th set, your performance will start diminishing.

And so, if you used 100 kg for the first 5 sets and did 10 reps on each set, on the last 5 sets, you may have to go down to 95 kg for 6-8 reps.

What you can do instead is split those 10 sets up into two separate workouts.

This will allow you to do a total of 10 sets of 10 reps with 100 kg.

And that leads to...? You guessed it - More quality volume!

#3 Rest Times Between Sets

If training frequency is the go-to way to create more training volume across separate workouts, we also have to think of ways to do that within an individual workout.

The way to do this is by optimizing rest times! By nature, intensity is strenuous, so it takes time for the body to recover before being able to go into a new high-output bout.

It is generally considered you should rest 60-90 seconds between each set, but that really isn't optimal.

For instance, if you use 100 kg for one set of 10 reps and only rest 60-90 seconds before the next set, it is likely that you'll do a couple of repetitions less.



However, if you rest 120-180 seconds (up to 3 minutes), it is more likely that you'll sustain your performance from set to set, leading to... MORE. QUALITY. VOLUME! ;)



#4 Recovery Windows

On a micro-scale, rest times between sets grant short-term recovery that helps you optimize the training stimuli.

When we zoom out, however, we see that workout-to-workout recovery is also important!

This is because the total volume of a workout combined impacts the muscles, their energy reserves, the nervous system, and even the hormones.

After a workout, the body takes time to recover and get those back up to the baseline and then some more!

If you don't rest enough between workouts, your performance will suffer.

The optimal rest time varies on many factors, but as a rule of thumb, you should aim to rest 72-96 hours after training a muscle group directly, before training it again.

#5 Nutrition & Sleep!

Speaking of recovery, the amount of time that passes before your next workout for a muscle group is just one factor for recovery.

The second factor is HOW it passes.

Remember that building muscle happens outside of the gym when you recover. In the gym, all that you do is create a stimulus for the muscles to grow, and when it comes to actually growing, it's all about proper recovery.

Muscle-building nutrition and sleep is a whole other animal of a topic, but let us give you the most actionable tips here and now:

1. Consume food at a surplus of calories to optimize growth
2. Consume enough protein from quality sources (~1g per lb of bodyweight, daily)



3. Consume enough dietary fat from quality sources (~0.45g per lb of bodyweight, daily)
4. Consume quality carbohydrates to fuel workout performance
5. Drink plenty of water



6. Go to bed at the same time (create a sleeping routine)
7. Sleep 7-8 hours a night
8. Avoid big meals right before sleep
9. Avoid screentime 1-2 hrs prior to sleep

FINAL THOUGHTS

To wrap this up, we have to say that muscle building is a long and worthwhile process.

It entails the careful planning and execution of a variety of training and lifestyle factors.

All in all, muscle gains happen every day, but they take time to show up as visual gains!

Focus on your training, eat well, sleep well, manage your stress, and gains will inevitably come to shape you as the next best Greek sculpture!

