

Jonathan: Hey, it's Jonathan Bailor. Excited to introduce you to assisted eccentric push-ups — a great exercise to work your chest muscles as well as your shoulder muscles as well as your triceps or the back of your arm, and really a great exercise to learn what eccentric movements are all about. This is a really, really simple one. It's a great way to get a good feeling for the movement and I recommend it's actually one that you get started with. Certainly, your squats and your smarter interval training are the exercises that are going to give you the most benefit long-term as they work the most musculature on your body or your lower body. Remember, about sixty to seventy percent of all the muscle on your body is below your waist so you want to focus at least sixty to seventy percent of your time exercising below your waist, not so much on things like curls and abs. Those aren't going to make the big systemic metabolic difference; your legs are. But that's not what we're talking about. Focus, Jonathan.

We're talking about push-ups. First, again, eccentric exercises are not a new form of exercise that you need to learn; it's just a new way to perform existing exercises you're likely already familiar with. So when we say "assisted eccentric push-up", all I'm saying is, here's a way to do a push-up that will focus on the lowering action, thereby maximizing the amount of muscle fibers you use rather than limiting the concentric action. What I mean by that — a little bit of a less exercise physiology way of phrasing it — so traditional push-up, you're probably very familiar with. You just go down and up. But for a lot of people, that's a tough movement, especially if we're carrying around a little bit of extra weight, if we have a weak upper body. So the idea of just doing a push-up is not something that's available to us, which is unfortunate because it's a great exercise. So how can we make this exercise more useful?

First of all, remember that there's two parts to every exercise. There's the eccentric, or the lowering, and the concentric, or the contracting or the raising. Now, while you may not be able to do a full concentric push-up — so while you may not be able to do this, I bet you're able to do, let's call it, a lower down. So imagine, keeping your knees on the ground — you might want to put a pillow or something under your knees if you're doing this on hard wood; of course, you can do it on carpet as well — so you put your knees down on the ground and then you lower yourself down nice and slow, nice and slow, nice and slow. And then, again, you might not be able to push yourself up but that's okay. Just get up however you can because you're just going to focus on the eccentric movement. So again, let's do that again.

Traditional push-up is going to be full body weight down, eccentric, up, concentric. That's the hardest way to do a push-up. If you want to make that really hard, you would do the eccentric down slowly for 10 seconds, as we talked about in other exercises, and then back up. But if you want to work your way up to that movement, you start with not your full body weight. So you start on your knees, you get in a proper push-up position — proper push-up position is where your hands are spaced out such that when you go down, your upper arms are about

perpendicular with the ground and your hands are even with your chest. So obviously your hands shouldn't be way up here, your hands shouldn't be way back here, your upper arms should be at about a 90-degree angle with your torso and then your forearms should be at about a 90-degree angle with the ground. So this is too close, this is too far out, we're looking at 90-degree angles everywhere. And if you go on YouTube and you type in "proper push-up form", certainly there's thousands, literally, of videos that go over how to do a basic push-up.

What I want to focus on here with you is how to focus on the eccentrics. Eccentric, most basic, is with knees down, 10 seconds down. [counts] That wasn't actually 10 seconds, but imagine it was. So if you can push yourself up now, that's fine. Do it. Push yourself up. That's excellent. Then you're going to go down [counts]. If you can't push yourself up, that's okay, get up however you can, and then you're going to lower yourself down. Now, if you're a little bit more advanced, what you might be able to do is actually the eccentric portion of a regular push-up. So you put your feet back, your butt up, your body is perpendicular — excuse me, about parallel with the ground, you lower yourself down for 10 seconds — this isn't actually 10 seconds — and then I want you to push yourself up not using your full body weight because, remember, while you might be able to lower or eccentrically contract using your full body weight because you're stronger that way, you might not be able to concentrically do it, so that's okay.

Again, we're focusing on the eccentric and then use the less resistance on the concentric. And then if you are really advanced, remember, just do a regular push-up except focus on the lowering portion for 10 seconds. Just master the basic push-up form and really start to get that feel for what it's like to take as much of your body weight on as possible for 10 seconds and, again, how much of my body weight should I use? However much forces you to be done at 10 seconds. Like we covered in the squat video, it's not that you're trying to lower yourself for 10 seconds, it's that, for example, if this is too easy and you could just hold this for an hour — probably not an hour — then put your feet back and maybe go to the most challenging position or the movement, so right here, and then just try to hold that for 10 seconds and then push yourself up. And then repeat that 10 seconds six times.

Now, if all of that is a little bit too challenging and you're just getting started, what you can do are wall push-ups. Wall push-ups just take even less of your body weight and apply it to your chest and shoulder muscles. Instead of pushing off the ground, what you would do is just stand a few feet back from a wall, put your hands in the same position as a regular push-up — and remember, you can learn how to do a regular push-up from a personal trainer; not new exercise, just a new way of doing the exercise — and then you would lower yourself down to the wall, touch your nose to the wall, and push back up. Again, if that's too challenging, if

you're recovering from an injury or if you're carrying a lot of extra weight, you might be able to lower yourself down, then step forward, just get repositioned, and lower yourself down.

But, see, what's so cool about this — what's so cool about eccentric exercise, in addition to all the hormonal benefits — is that, for example, a push-up, which you may have never been able to do in your entire life, a push-up is a great exercise. It does so many wonderful things for your body. But if the choice is between “be strong enough to do a regular push-up” and “never do push-ups,” that stinks because a lot of people aren't yet able to do regular push-ups.

Well, you certainly will be able to do regular push-ups when you work your way up to them. The way you can work your way up to them is at the most basic level, starting with eccentric wall push-ups and then moving down to knees-on-the-ground eccentric push-ups. Again, only lowering down, not worrying about raising up. Then, before you know it, you're going to be strong enough to do the full eccentric/concentric —

Again, very slow, 10 seconds on the way down, get up however you can, 10 seconds on the way down. We're going to do 10 seconds for this and every other exercise for six repetitions, 60 seconds' time under tension and you're going to see amazing results.