

Jonathan: Hey, it's Jonathan Bailor. Let's go over assisted eccentric shoulder press. Like every other exercise, shoulder press is not a new exercise. It's not some new-fangled gadget or gizmo that you need to learn. It's a very basic exercise. If you type in "how to do shoulder press" into your favorite search engine or ask any personal trainer, you will learn exactly how to do a conventional shoulder press, which is a great way to work your shoulders and your triceps.

What we're going to cover here is how to do an eccentric shoulder press so that you work the most muscle fibers, trigger the biggest hormonal response possible, and heal your system. Again, it's not learning new exercises; it's learning a new technique you can apply to all your exercises to make them infinitely more effective.

If you've watched the push-up video — and if you haven't, I would recommend that you do — shoulder press is very similar to a push-up. Push-up is this movement; shoulder press is this movement, so it's like a push-up over your head. How do we do a shoulder press where we are lowering more resistance than we are lifting? Traditional shoulder press is done with dumbbells or a barbell, for example. So if you have a 5-pound dumbbell in either hand, you'd be lifting 5 pounds and lowering 5 pounds but then you would stop when you could no longer lift 5 pounds, which isn't actually when your muscle fibers are fully exhausted because you could lower the 5 pounds because you're stronger eccentrically.

How do we make sure we eccentrically fatigue our muscles? Here's how. This is a non-optimal prop but I wanted to show you how flexible this can be. Ideally, you would have a dumbbell. You can even use resistance bands. I'll also show you a way to do this using your body weight but if you're just getting started, you could use a moderately heavy object such as this CD binder — remember CDs? Pretty bulky. So what you would do — and this is, again, just illustrative — so I've got my CD binder here.

Traditional shoulder press means pushing up, lowering down, pushing up, lowering down. Just like with any exercise, it's a good idea to get warmed up, maybe do some standard shoulder press just to get warm. But let's say this CD case weighs 10 pounds — which it very well may, it is surprisingly heavy. So imagine right now I'm lifting 5 pounds with my left arm and 5 pounds with my right arm because I'm doing 5 pounds on either arm, total of 10 pounds distributed evenly. So I'm pushing it up, lowering it down.

How do I use more resistance on the way down? Well, like we did with the squat, you can imagine I'm pushing up with both limbs and now I'm going to try to kind of slowly lower this with one limb. I'm spotting myself, you can notice here, so if for some reason, I kind of lost control, I could catch the weight. I don't want to drop the weight. Also, you could just maintain grip with both hands but focus on lowering it using one arm more than the other, using the other arm to spot yourself.

Again, instead of being 5 pounds on either arm, right now you could imagine I'm doing 10 pounds on one arm, which I might not be able to lift but I could lower. I might not be able to lift 10 pounds with one arm. I could lift 5 pounds with one arm — both arms here — and then I could lower 10 pounds with one arm. When it comes to actually doing the shoulder press with proper form — this is a critical, critical — all exercise forms are critical but I really want you to focus on this one because it involves your shoulder, your rotator cuff, which is a very sensitive joint, so really make sure you've got the form nailed here. But the point is, just like any other exercise where you traditionally use both of your legs or both of your arms, you can use both of your arms to lift the weight and one arm, or use one arm to spot the other arm, to lower the weight to have a stronger eccentric load than a concentric load.

Now, another way you can do this using your body weight is a derivation of the push-ups since these are very similar movements. A push-up, as we talked about, is when you're flat. Now, if you want to put more of the emphasis on your shoulder, what you can do is get your body a bit more like a V. You can see this is obviously not a push-up position; this is more of a V position. And then what you would do is you would slowly lower yourself down for 10 seconds and then push yourself back up. But again, that's pretty challenging. That's using your full body weight on the way down and on the way up so you might not be able to do that. What you might be able to do is slowly lower yourself down for 10 seconds — that wasn't 10 seconds — and then just get up however you can.

Don't worry if you can't do both the eccentric and the concentric. I want you to just focus on getting stronger and if you focus on the eccentric long enough, you will get strong enough to do the full eccentric and concentric. So you would just get in that top position — and look up “V push-up” on the Internet or “shoulder press push-up” for a bunch of examples of this — and you would just slowly lower yourself down for 10 seconds, making sure you're breathing [rapid heavy bursts] like we talked about in the squat video. Get all the way down. Can't push yourself up — that's fine. Stop.

If that's not challenging enough — with this and any other exercise — find the most challenging position. Usually it's right before you stop, so it would be right at the bottom, and then hold that for 10 seconds. Remember, you're not trying to lower yourself for 10 seconds — for this or any other exercise; rather, you're trying to hold the position. But because you're using so much resistance, gravity will force you to go all the way down.

Those are just two ways that you can take a traditional shoulder press and use more resistance during the eccentric portion than the concentric portion, activate more muscle fibers, trigger more healing and unclogging hormones, and get dramatically better results. Like every other exercise, you're going for six repetitions, 10 seconds each.

