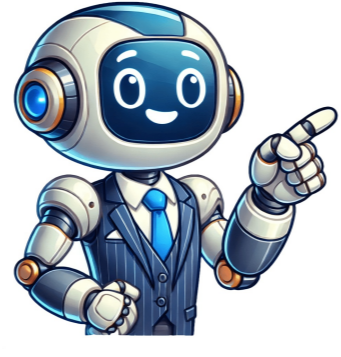


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Home/Fitness/12 Ways to Build Muscle (WITHOUT Lifting Weights) Building muscle without weights is possible through bodyweight exercises, yoga, and electric muscle stimulation. Proper diet, sleep, and stress management are also key. Lifting weights isn't for everyone, fortunately there are alternatives you can consider, including a number that are fun (and don't require very much exertion). Here are 12 ways to build muscle without weights. Bodyweight exercises can be particularly effective for those who are unable to provide resistance that uses their own body weight, which can help to increase your strength and build muscle. In fact, you can use them all to build muscle without equipment. Core is an excellent movement to build size, strength and power into the triceps... some sit-ups or dips within a training programme is a wise idea if you're looking to develop this muscle group and improve your pressing strength. Building muscle with zero exertion might sound too good to be true, but electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) is proven to work. If you're not familiar with EMS, here is a quick summary: Electrical muscle stimulation is delivered via an EMS machine that stimulates your motor nerves and induces muscle contractions, mimicking the way they contract during a workout. Here at The Good Body we recently explored the benefits of EMS and discovered that since 1982 it has been known to be an effective tool for building muscle. A research project in Russia looked at how highly trained athletes could benefit from EMS treatment. After just nine weeks, respondents saw strength improvements of between 30% and 40%. The World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology came to a similar conclusion, discovering that both strength and muscle size was increased. Fitness facts highlight that swimming is a great form of exercise. It's often recommended by health professionals as it's low impact so kind to your joints. Despite it not being as strenuous as lifting dumbbells, you can gain muscle mass. Athletic training and nutrition magazine, STACK, comment that you only need to look at Olympic swimmers if you're wondering whether swimming can help you bulk up. They do add however that you won't develop muscle as quickly as you would by using free weights. 2023 yoga statistics show it has grown phenomenally over the last few years, with an estimated 34.4 million Americans now practicing. It's not surprising when you consider the whole host of yoga benefits. There are advantages unique to men, plus many ways yoga can help women — even little yogis can enjoy a boost. Though yoga might look like a super relaxing form of exercise, and it can be, it can also strengthen most of your muscles. In fact, there's a number of yoga poses that, as you might expect, are particularly good for building muscle. One of the most powerful is another way you can encourage greater muscle growth with equipment or heading the weight rack. Great sources of protein include turkey, eggs, lentils and oil of the amino acids that make up protein act as the building blocks for muscle tissue, helping you to both build and maintain lean muscle mass. Resistance training commonly involves using elasticated bands during bodyweight exercises. If there's a particular area you're looking to build up, resistance training can be the ideal technique. It allows you to target specific muscle groups. A systematic review of all the research around resistance training and muscle hypertrophy reached the same conclusion: Resistance training should be used by people looking to maximise muscle growth. This form of exercise is also used during physical therapy for people recovering from an injury, as a gentler way to rebuild muscle strength. Going for a quick run is another way you can build muscle without lifting weights. Dietitian Gavin Van De Walle explains the science behind how it helps: Aerobic exercise like running is thought to build muscle by inhibiting proteins that interfere with muscle growth and decreasing muscle protein breakdown (MPB). However, he warns you need to be careful how long your run lasts! On the other hand, long-distance running can significantly increase MPB and thus hinder muscle growth. Getting on your bike is a good way to stay in shape, but you might be surprised to read that cycling is also one of many fun ways to build muscle. That's down to the resistance element of the sport. Working against an opposing force builds muscle, and in cycling that of course means your calves, quads, hamstrings and glutes. The sleep statistics don't lie, we're getting less and less! Which is shocking news when you consider just how many health benefits there are to getting an early night. Research is still fairly limited, but there is evidence to show how important sleep is to the process of muscle growth. Sleep debt (the difference between the amount of sleep you should be getting and the amount you actually get) decreases protein synthesis which contributes to the loss of muscle mass and inhibits muscle recovery. Thankfully there are lots of different evidence-based ways you can improve your sleep, such as wearing a sleep mask! We're becoming an increasingly stressed out society with just one more thing to add to our to-do list: how to get a good night's sleep. Reducing stress isn't easy, but keeping a journal can help or you could start reciting an affirmation for stress relief each day. Sitting up straight must be one of the easiest ways to generate muscle growth without weights! Just take a look at the benefits of good posture and you'll see that core strength is one major advantage. If you practice good posture you'll build core strength, and vice versa. An article published in the Journal of Physical Therapy Science highlighted how correct posture increases abdominal muscle activity, helping you to develop a stronger core. Sign-up for The Good Body mailing list and be the first to receive our latest news! If you do not have access to weight equipment or a gym, do not worry! You can build an impressive upper body with simple exercises that use your body weight as resistance. These excellent exercises also strengthen your core. Pull-ups, chin-ups, and push-ups are the best upper-body exercises without weights. Properly performed, these exercises will result in a very impressive upper body and can also be a valuable addition to any bodybuilding program. Women doing pull ups In my opinion, the number one exercise is pull-ups. This is the best exercise without weights and the best upper-body exercise, period! This is a tough exercise, which is exactly why it is one of the best muscle builders. Many bodybuilders and strength athletes do not perform this excellent exercise because it is too hard and requires too few reps. Who wants to be seen in the gym doing an exercise that is a struggle? This is a shame because, for the time spent, this exercise will strengthen more muscles than almost any other exercise in the gym. With just this one movement, you can build an impressive back, biceps, and forearms. You will notice that bodybuilders who do pull-ups with or without weights as a regular part of their routine always have the most impressive upper backs and biceps. The pull-up will develop your biceps, lats, grip, forearms, and abs. One of the reasons I like this more than lat pull-downs on a lat machine is that it engages the core. The exercise is a great form of core training as well. This is a movement that develops strength that uses the real world as the gym. If you are strong at pulling your body weight, you can climb over obstacles, use your wings, etc. To perform this one movement, you can build a bar that is at least 6 feet off the ground. If you do not have such a bar, there are very inexpensive chin-up bars that fit without tools on any doorway to enable you to do pull-ups pretty much anywhere a doorway is available. Related article: 5 Reasons You're Not Seeing Results in the Gym After warming up, grasp the bar with an overhand grip (chin-ups are done with an underhand grip) and hang from the bar with arms perfectly straight. Now, slowly pull yourself up by contracting your back (lats) and bending your arms until your chin is at or above the bar. Perform at least three sets of as many reps as you can. If you can't do more than a couple of reps or none at all, here are some ways to increase your strength so that you can do them. Use an elastic exercise band to assist you. Loop the band under your feet and over the bar to assist you until you develop the strength to do pull-ups without the band. Place a stool next to you and use your leg to assist you up. Then, hang from the bar with bent arms and fight gravity on the way down. This is called a "negative" rep. Do this five or six times a few times weekly, and you will soon develop enough strength to pull yourself up. Man doing push ups These are an excellent exercise as well. Push-ups are better than bench presses regarding the number of muscles recruited and worked during the exercise. Push-ups will work the chest, shoulders, triceps, upper back, and abdominals (core). This is the entire front of your upper body. Your upper back (lats) are worked because they help to stabilize the entire shoulder girdle and are flexed throughout the whole movement, and your abs are worked as they fight to keep the body straight. There are several ways to modify the basic push-up. Modifying it not only makes your workouts more fun, but it also hits different muscles and can help build a more complete physique. You can elevate your feet on a stool or chair to increase resistance or drop to your knees to decrease resistance. Another variation I love is the suspended push-up, which uses homemade TRX straps. Most people know how to do this basic exercise, but here are a few pointers to make it more effective for you. Keep your body as straight as possible from your head to your feet. Fortify your training can be an effective way to increase your strength and improve body composition. A 2021 review in Sports Medicine found that bodyweight exercises like chin-ups, pushups, and pull-ups can help you build muscle strength and even improve cardiovascular health when performed with enough volume and intensity. Beyond the health benefits, bodyweight training removes the need for expensive gym memberships and bulky equipment to reach your fitness goals. All you need is your body weight, a safe area with enough space to do the exercises, and a determination to put in the work. With just a few simple exercises, you can target all the major muscle groups in your upper body and see actual results in no time. And since this workout can be done anywhere, anytime, it leaves no room for excuses to skip your workout. Whether you're pressed for time, traveling, or prefer the convenience of working out at home, keep reading for Masi's #1 best no-equipment workout for upper-body strength. And when you're finished, be sure to check out this Low-Impact Exercise May Be Better for You Than Cardio, Study Suggests. Pushups Shutterstock First up is the classic pushup, a staple bodyweight exercise for targeting your chest, shoulders, and triceps while engaging your core for stability. To perform this exercise, Masi says, "Lie face down with your palms on the ground shoulder-width apart. Push your body up until your arms are fully extended, keeping your body straight. Lower back bend. If needed, use an elevated surface to make this exercise easier." Complete four sets of 10 to 15 reps with 60 seconds of rest between sets. I tried 3 Pairs of Brooks Running Shoes & One Beats the Rest by a Mile Plank-ups Shutterstock This dynamic movement is excellent for toning your arms and adding definition to your abdomen. "Start in a plank position on your forearms. Push up from one arm to a pushup position, and then follow with the other arm. Return to the forearm plank by lowering one arm down and then the other," says Masi. Perform four sets of eight to 10 reps per arm with 30 seconds of rest between sets. Downward Facing Dog Shutterstock You might think this movement is just for yoga, but it can be an excellent way to strengthen your upper body. "Start in a pushup position, then press your hips up to the ceiling, letting your arms go over your head," instructs Masi. 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up, therefore initially recruiting many of the muscles active during the move. And research has even shown that "hanging by the hands" using a horizontal bar can improve endurance over time. Personally, I love the challenge and spend the time focusing on my breathing, and it helps prepare my wrists and hands from lifting heavy weights. I always feel lengthened and stretched out after a few minutes on the bar before a workout and I love how it makes my spine and back feel after a day spent writing at my desk.

VerdictIf you sit for prolonged periods or favor heavy weightlifting in the gym, the dead hang is perfect for stretching tight muscles and relieving tension in the spine. Primarily targeting the lats, shoulders, arms and upper traps, you'll find stretching these muscles and engaging your core should help improve posture, when performed regularly over time and in conjunction with other strength exercises for posture, mobility work and plenty of daily movement. If you have access to a door frame, trees, pull-up bars, local parks, or gymnastic rings, you can do a dead hang, making it one of the most accessible ways to develop upper body strength. More from Tom's Guide Keen to work out your upper body without needing any additional weights or equipment? Then these upper body bodyweight exercises could be just what you need! We have upper body ideas for beginners and more advanced exercisers, so either jump to the section you need below, or read on for more: 5 Beginners Upper Body Bodyweight Exercises5 Advanced Upper Body Bodyweight ExercisesWhat are Bodyweight Exercises?Bodyweight exercises are movements that help build strength and fitness, without the need for additional weights. In many cases, they don't need any other equipment at all. These exercises focus on simply using the weight of your own body to challenge your muscles, so are easy to do wherever you are, whether that's at home, on your lunch break or at the gym. Can I use bodyweight exercises to build upper body strength?Yes, absolutely. Many of the best bodyweight workouts include exercises that target the whole body, so you'll be able to see results in your arms, back and chest with these movements. If you're aiming to bulk up these upper body areas, we'd generally recommend incorporating some additional weight as you progress, using dumbbells, kettlebells or weighted plates. However, this isn't always possible, so if you need to keep your upper body bodyweight exercises completely equipment-free, then it's worth building in more reps, extending the duration of each movement (particularly the moment of higher tension) or trying more challenging variations of each exercise.

An excellent all-round exercise, planks will boost your arm, back, chest, shoulder and upper body strength whilst also targeting your core and glutes. Check out more variations of planks here. To perform: Lie on a mat with your forearms on the floor just under each shoulder and feet hip-width apartWith your toes on the floor, lift up so your bodyweight is balanced on your forearms and toesFocus on keeping your core engaged and your shoulder blades relaxedHold for as long as you can, working on increasing the time as you get stronger2. Up Down PlanksOnce you're comfortable with a regular plank, you can start to introduce Up Down Planks. They'll add an extra boost to your plank by including some dynamic movement, while also helping to strengthen your back, improve your posture and work your core. To perform: Start in a regular plank position with forearms on the floorPlace your left hand on the mat below your shoulder and straighten, before following with your right armYou'll now be in a raised plank position - keep your core engaged and your back straightHold for a few moments before bending your left elbow onto the mat and repeating with the right armSwitch sides as you repeat on alternate sides3. Incline push upsIf a classic push up is a little too much of a challenge then incline push ups are an easier starting point, still providing an effective upper body and core workout. By raising the upper body off the ground, some of the pressure is taken off your arms and shoulders, with plenty of emphasis on the chest area. You can perform these on an exercise bench or box, but the arm of a sofa will also work perfectly. One of our favourite options is using stairs, as you can drop a step over time as you become stronger, slowly working your way to a regular floor-based push up. This guide will teach you more about how to master your first push up. To perform: Start in a classic plank position, but with your feet on the floor and your hands on the edge of your chosen platform. Keep feet shoulder-width apart and arms straight, below your shouldersYour body should still be in a straight line, but raised at the frontOnce ready, bend your elbows, keeping them tucked as close into your body as you canLower your chest as far towards your hands as you can, before pushing back up through your arms to starting position4. Bird dog holdsExcellent for relieving lower back pain and strengthening your back muscles, bird dog holds are great for improving posture and flexibility. These will also help to boost your core and glutes. To perform:Start on all fours, with your knees below your hips and your hands below your shouldersEngage your core and keep your back straightAt the same time, lift up your left arm until it's in front of you, level with your shoulders, and push out your right leg until it's raised straight out behind youHold for 5 seconds before lowering and then swap to the the right arm and left leg5. Prone I, Y, TAnother fantastic exercise for improving posture - by targeting the lower and mid back and the muscles around your spine - Prone I, Y and T can help tackle back pain by engaging and strengthening a range of critical muscles. To perform:Lie face down on your mat, with arms straight out ahead of you and feet around hip-width apartEngaging your core, lift your arms up off the ground in front of you, hold for a moment, then lower back to the ground (this is your 'I')Move your arms into a 'Y' position, engage your core and lift your arms off the ground. Hold for a moment before lowering Move your arms out to a 'T' position, engage your core and lift your arms off the ground. Hold for a moment before lowering This is one complete rep. Return to 'I' position to repeat.1. Pike push upsPerfect for increasing shoulder strength and improving core stability, you should feel these working your shoulders, arms, chest back and core. To perform:Lying on your front with your hands on the floor at shoulder height, push up through your arms, upwards and back with your hips and back through your heels until you're in the 'downward dog' position (like an upside down 'v' shape) - this is your starting positionEngaging your core, bend your elbows out to the sides so the crown of your head lowers to the floorHold for a moment before pushing back up to starting position2. Chin upsIt makes sense to look at chin-ups essentially as reverse push-ups. Not only do they work just about every muscle in the body, they specifically target the opposing set of muscles to those most worked by push ups. Chin ups will work the biceps and lats amazingly well, while secondarily stressing the core and deltoids, and creating the kind of full-body tension that packs on muscle all over your frame. You'll need a basic level of equipment, such as a climbing frame or sturdy doorframe. To perform:Standing beneath the frame, take hold of the horizontal bar with both hands in an underhand grip around shoulder-width apart. Your fingers should be facing in towards your faceEngaging your core, raise your body until your chin is above the bar - sometimes crossing your feet can help with balance and weight distributionHold for a moment before lowering yourself back down in a controlled way, until your arms are straight again3. BurpeesThis full body movement is excellent for building strength and boosting cardio, working your arms, back, chest, core, legs and glutes. It's a high energy movement (great for adding in as a HIIT movement) that will also help to burn fat and tone up. Learn more variations to mix up your burpees here. Stand straight with feet shoulder-width apartEngaging your core, drop into a high plank position by placing your hands on the floor, shoulder distance apart, with your feet and legs straight out behind youKeeping your back straight and abs engaged, drop your chest lightly to the floor in a controlled movement, keeping elbows tucked to either side of the bodyPush yourself back up to standing by extending your arms and jump your feet back so that they land just below your handsSwing your arms up and jump as high as you can so your feet leave the groundThis is one rep - repeat for the required number4. Clapping push upsAnother advanced variation of a push up, with an extra challenge to burn more energy, clapping push ups include rapid, explosive movements that are perfect for targeting your chest, triceps and shoulders. Start in a regular push up position, with your feet slightly closer than shoulder-width and your hands either shoulder-width or wider Lower yourself to the ground in a slow, controlled movement with elbows tucked in and your core engagedContinuing to keep your body straight, push explosively upwards through your hands to propel your upper body into the airClap your hands together while off the groundAim to land in your starting position, as softly as possible, with extended but not locked arms5. Mountain ClimbersThis compound movement is another great full body movement that's particularly effective for strengthening your upper body, with plenty of work for your core and legs too. Expect to feel this around your arms, back and shoulders in particular. Including this movement in your upper body bodyweight workouts will also help to boost your balance, agility and coordination. Learn more with our How to do Mountain Climbers guide. To perform: Start in a press-up position with your hands positioned beneath your shouldersEngage your core and, as fast as you can, pull your right knee inwards towards your chest and then return to the start positionRepeat with your left legThis should be a high paced movement - start practising slowly and once you're used to the movement, aim to move more quicklyIf you want to make bodyweight exercises more challenging, check out our guide to callisthenics where Personal Trainer Phil looks at ways to progress bodyweight movement. Upper Body Bodyweight HIIT ExercisesIf you're looking for a HIIT workout focusing on bodyweight exercises for the upper body, consider including a range of movements we've discussed in this article with a high intensity option at the end. For example: 1 minute up down planks1 minute bird dog holds1 minute incline push ups30 seconds burpees30 seconds restLearn more about the best HIIT workout for you here. For more upper body bodyweight exercises, check out our best bodyweight exercises blog hereWhether you're working out at home or in the gym, you can also download the free PureGym app and create a customised training plan for your fitness goals.Still not sure where to begin? Our Starting at the Gym hub has plenty of ideas for workouts to try. Or you could consider booking a session with a dedicated Personal Trainer at PureGym - they're able to offer a wealth of advice and fitness plans.All blog posts