

Accessorizing Your **Body**

By Jeffrey S. Harrison, CSCS, NSCA-CPT, ACE-CES

There are few things that are as pleasing to the eye as a beautiful woman in a stunning dress complete with the accompanying accessories; or if you are a woman, perhaps a gentleman in a nice three piece suit. However, far be it from me to give any advice on fashion. As a fitness professional, my daily wardrobe consists of a combination of shorts, pants, sneakers, shirts, jackets, or pullovers from name brands such as Nike, Adidas, or Under Armour. While these items are definitely comfortable and somewhat stylish, they probably won't be turning heads on a night out on the town. Instead, I will leave that to the "fashion police" to determine what's hot and stylish to wear. My expertise, if you will, lies with what actually supports those fashionable threads - the body.

Fashion and fitness do have a somewhat inverse relationship. It is possible to be completely out of shape but yet have a superb fashion sense. Likewise, it's just as possible to have no eye for fashion and have the body of an Adonis. In a society that measures heavily on outward appearance, a combination of both a keen sense of fashion and a stunning physique is ideal, and in some cases paramount. Not only is that unfortunate, but it generally leads people to cover up rather than addressing and working on the real issue; the fact that we were all given only one body and that if we don't take care of it, we can't go to Nordstrom's to get a new one. Our bodies are priceless, truly magnificent works of art better than anything a designer could produce. While we can accessorize our wardrobe, most of do not think of accessorizing our bodies. After all, when was the last time you saw the arms you always wanted hanging on the rack at your favorite clothing store?

Picking up a fitness magazine or exercise book will certainly leave most readers in a state of complete confusion in regards to exercise, especially when it comes to weight training. Terms like toning, sculpting, defining, etc. are tossed around as if they all refer to something different, when in fact they basically mean the same thing. Aside from the differences in muscle size and make up, every one of us, male and female, possess all the same muscles: pectorals, biceps, lats, quads, abs, etc. Therefore, whether a male or a female is looking to sculpt or tone his or her body, they are doing the same exact thing, moving their muscles against an external resistance. Without muscle, there can be no toning. Without muscle, there is nothing to sculpt. Plain and simple, to change or improve the shape of our bodies, muscle must be stimulated. All too often the mistake is made by both genders, but especially by females, that in order to tone, sculpt or define the muscle, very little, if any, attention is actually spent on trying to build muscle. Building muscle is not to be confused with building bulky muscles, which occurs through a much different mechanism. Building muscle for the purpose of improving one's physical shape does not have to involve vein popping lifting, but it is more involved than just picking up light weights and looking pretty while doing it. Building muscle, so that there is muscle to tone and sculpt begins with stimulating the



epicenter of true growth and calorie burning in the body - the large muscle groups.

As previously stated, our bodies are amazing machines powered predominantly by four major, or primary, muscle groups (legs, back, chest, and the core musculature) that cause four primary movements, also known as pillars of movement (locomotion, push and pull, rotation, and up and down, or changing of our center of gravity). The remaining muscle groups (shoulders, biceps, triceps, and calves) are known as secondary, or accessory muscles. These muscle groups are not large by nature in comparison to the primary muscle groups, but generally are the muscles most focused on when individuals focus on wanting to tone or sculpt their bodies. The good news is that by working the primary muscle groups through key lifts such as chest presses, pulldowns, or squats, all of the secondary muscles get worked as well. The bad news is that by working primarily on the secondary muscle groups, commonly referred to as spot toning, you really miss the boat on building a truly magnificent physique. By working the larger muscle groups you not only strengthen the entire body and the primary movements, but begin real physical growth. Then to enhance, or accessorize the body, specific isolation work can be done on the secondary muscles. A well-rounded weight lifting program would then be one that is built on predominantly training the larger, primary movers of the body, then isolating the secondary accessory movers. A weight-training program that focuses primarily on the accessory muscle groups will yield a body far beneath its true potential, even if on the surface, it appears to possess the strength of a lion.

There are "experts" everyday who proclaim they have come up with the latest, proven method for toning and sculpting the body you have always wanted. They mislead you to believe that there is some secret formula to the order that the exercises are completed or how they are to be performed. Yet what they fail to address is the fundamental law of muscle physiology that muscle will adapt and change to whatever stimulus that it encounters. Therefore, if change is not happening, then something has to be modified. Free weights, machines, bands, bodyweight, medicine balls, etc., whatever you prefer, if it is change you seek, then change you must cause.

Of course, nothing can replace hard work, consistent effort, and dedication. Just like putting together a knock-out ensemble, you would first choose the outfit itself, whether it is a dress or suit, and then you would enhance that outfit by accessorizing it. The end result: an outfit that says, "WOW!" and turns everyone's heads. In any case, it's not the dress that makes the body; it's the body that makes the dress.



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