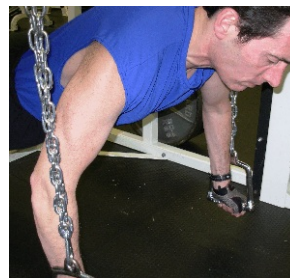
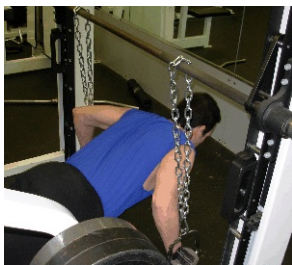


SMITH MACHINE WORKOUT

I decided to write this article because Smith machines are such a popular piece of equipment. They inhabit just about every large gym and health club, and are found in many smaller studios, hotel fitness centers, and home gyms. Unfortunately, the Smith machine probably isn't the best thing to do squats and bench presses in. Common sense indicates that trying to conform a multi-joint, arced movement to a straight line, might over time cause some problems. Bench pressing with a bar or dumbbells lets you create your own pathway, and works important stabilizing muscles. Squatting with a barbell does the same, and allows for proper spinal alignment and rotation of the pelvis. Besides not worrying about getting stuck under the bar if you're training alone, I can't think of a reason to use a Smith machine instead of a barbell. Don't get me wrong..I've used it plenty over the years, but changed my thinking through my education and growth as a trainer, and observations and experience in the weight room. But instead of avoiding it completely, try adding a couple of these unique exercises to some of your workouts. I didn't invent any of them myself, but came across them and found out they really work.

1. **Chain Push ups** - This will test your coordination and work the stabilizing muscles used in bench pressing, while blasting your pecs, triceps and midsection. You'll need to go to the hardware store and get two lengths of sturdy chain, each exactly 4 feet long. I counted the links to ensure both chains were exactly the same. Also, pick up 2 carabiners (those teardrop shaped clips that connect a chain or cable to bars and handles). All this will cost you around 15 bucks..and it's well worth it. Set the bar in the Smith machine to about waist height, and loop both chains around the bar, a bit wider than shoulder width apart. Now both chains are hanging down about 2 feet from the bar. Attach a metal pulley handle to the ends of each chain, with both handles hanging down under the bar. Adjust the height of the bar so the handles are suspended a couple of inches off the ground, about 2 feet apart. Grasp the handles and walk your feet back until your legs are straight, and handles are even with your chest. As when doing regular pushups, make sure to keep your back straight and hips up. Right away, before you even do the first rep, you'll feel the muscles throughout your torso and shoulders working to stabilize and hold you steady. Slowly lower yourself until your chest is between the handles, then powerfully press back up until arms are straight. To make them harder, elevate your feet on a bench. In the photos below you'll see both the bottom and top positions of this exercise.



2. **Chain Rows** - After the push ups, the chains are already in place. Raise the bar and set it at a height so that when you grasp the handles, you can hang with your arms fully extended. Keep your legs straight with heels on the ground, and maintain good posture. Walk forward until your chest is under the bar, your back a few inches off the ground. You're now in the reverse position of a chain push up, looking up at the bar. Pull yourself up to the bar, handles finishing by the sides of the

ribcage. Lower slowly until your arms straighten, then repeat. Below are the top and bottom positions of the exercise. To increase the difficulty, elevate your feet onto a bench. This will effectively lower your upper body and increase the percentage of your body weight being lifted.



3. **One Arm Row** - This is an interesting way to turn the Smith machine into a rowing machine, using the sliding bar as you would a dumbbell. An instance where this could be useful is in a hotel gym that doesn't have heavy enough dumbbells, or any free weights at all. For this exercise, place any safety catches or stops to the lowest setting, as the bar needs to travel to the bottom of the machine. Load the bar to approximately what you'd use for a dumbbell row, remembering that the bar itself probably weighs between 30-50 lbs. Set the bar as low to the ground as possible. Place a flat bench lengthwise (parallel to the bar), about a foot from the bar. Assume the starting position for a dumbbell row; a knee and hand on the bench for support, keeping your back and head in a flat, neutral position. Reach down and grasp the bar, lifting slightly off the ground to a starting position. Pull up and in with your elbow, finishing with your hand near the side of your waist. Slowly lower the bar to the starting position. Switch directions on the bench to work the other side. Below are the start and finish to this exercise.



4. **Assisted Chin ups** - there are various ways to modify pullups or chinups if you're not yet strong enough to do them on your own. I saw this variation on a unique website that I really recommend, www.stumptuous.com. Sit under the bar and extend your arms directly overhead, setting the height at or just above where your fingers end. Place a bench a couple of feet in front of the bar, running lengthwise (parallel) to the bar. Sitting underneath, reach up and grasp the bar in an underhand grip, hands slightly wider than shoulders. Your butt should now be just off the ground. Put your legs up on the bench and cross them at the ankles. Having your legs up takes away some of your body weight. Now pull up to the bar, keeping your elbows back and head up. Slowly lower yourself down until arms are straight. Over time, you can build up enough strength to try regular

chins from an overhand bar. The photos below illustrate both the start and finish.



5. **Endurance Hold** - An excellent grip builder, this exercise also works the abs and hip flexor muscles, using the Smith machine as you would a conventional chinning bar. But because you can adjust the height, you have the option of using the ground to modify the degree of difficulty. Set the bar at the topmost position and grasp in an overhand (palms facing away from the body) grip, hands shoulder width apart. Now hang underneath and bend your knees, lifting feet off the ground. Keep your midsection tight and focus on squeezing the bar in your hands. Make sure to breathe regularly and keep your head and neck centered. You want to hold on for as long as your grip will allow, lower your heels to the ground if your abs need a rest but keep your body weight on your hands and arms. The exercise ends when your forearms are burning and you can't hold on any longer. It's a simple but effective way to enhance your hand and wrist strength.