

How to get a great upper body workout without going to the gym

By Derek Simon

Although it's popular to claim there are "no excuses" when it comes to getting or staying in shape, the fact is there are *lots* of excuses.

Remember "Fit Mom" Maria Kang?

She drew the ire of the internet when she posted a picture of herself — looking very toned — and her three sons, along with the tagline: "What's Your Excuse?" Three years later, after separating from her husband and dealing with a variety of other personal issues, Kang was singing a slightly different tune.

"There were constantly events, children, stress and even some depression, that prevented me from following through on my quarterly goals," she wrote regarding the 10 pounds she'd packed on since her Facebook post went viral.

Sound familiar?

Hey, we all have life events that thwart our best laid plans from time to time. If you prioritize the gym over everything else in your life, you're probably going to wind up like this guy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOblcpwUegE>

So, what do you do when you can't get to the gym?

Well, here's a great way you can get a great upper body workout no matter where you are: I'm talking about good, old-fashioned pushups.

I know, I know, everybody's looking for something different, something unique — and pushups are about as unoriginal as peanut butter and jelly. But just like that classic treat, sometimes tried and true is the best way to go. At its core, gaining and retaining muscle is not particularly complicated: it's about taxing the muscles and creating microscopic tears in the muscle fibers, which leads to repair and, ultimately, growth.

From that standpoint, pushups are a fantastic upper body workout.

In fact, a 2018 study conducted at North Dakota State University showed "no significant differences" between a similar group of people doing pushups and those doing bench press exercises, provided that "different progressive variations" were used, e.g. more reps, added weight, etc.

And, hey, isn't that precisely what most of us do when we bench press? How many people lift the same amount of weight the same number of times each set? It just makes sense that for pushups to be as effective as the bench press, they need to be performed in a similar manner, with varied resistance and repetitions.

So, I know what many of you are thinking: How do you vary the weight, or resistance, when doing pushups?

Easy. Simply place weighted objects on your back. This serves two purposes:

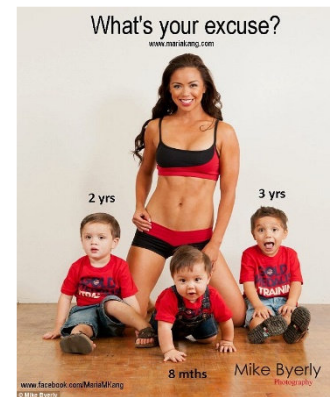
1. It increases the resistance.
2. Depending on the load, it invokes other (core) muscles to keep the weight balanced.

There are also different ways you can do pushups for maximum results.

Traditional

To do a traditional pushup, lie flat on your stomach and place your hands directly next to your shoulders — keeping your feet pointed forward, so that tips of your toes are touching the floor. Now, simply — or maybe not so simply — attempt to extend your arms and raise your torso off the ground. Gently lower your body and repeat this process as many times as you wish.

Be careful not to lock your arms completely, as this can be hard on your elbow joints.



Note: If you are unable to raise your body off the floor, try pivoting off your knees instead of your toes.

Form Tip: Make sure to keep your body as straight as possible — keep that butt down!

Close Hands (Diamond)

The close-hands pushup is great for isolating the triceps (the large muscles on the back of the upper arm). The procedure is the same as above, except that the hands are placed side by side, with the left thumb and forefinger touching (or close to touching) the right thumb and forefinger, thereby forming a diamond shape.

Form Tip: Keep your elbows as close to your sides as possible to better isolate the triceps.

Wide Hands

To isolate the pectoral muscles and build up your chest, start in the traditional position, but move your hands further away from your shoulders — the further away, the better.

Form Tip: Make sure your left and right hands are an equal distance from your left and right shoulders, respectively.

Staggered Hands

As the name suggests, this type of pushup mandates that one hand be placed lower (closer to the waist) than the other, which puts greater emphasis on that arm *and* activates more of the core muscles. As an added variation, this can be done with your hands closer together or farther apart.

Form Tip: Make sure your elbows are in a comfortable position and not being stressed. Muscle pain is fine; joint pain is not!

Fingertip (advanced)

These can be dangerous if you do them wrong, so be sure to focus on your form to avoid injuring yourself.

To begin, lie on your stomach and keep your feet pointed forward, so that tips of your toes are touching the floor just like they would be for a traditional pushup. However, instead of placing your hands next to your shoulders, place them as far forward (above your head) as possible, cupping them so that only your fingertips are touching the ground.

Then, just like before, attempt to lift your body off the ground—again, being very careful to keep your fingers rigid to avoid injury.

Fingertip pushups are great for developing the forearms, along with the shoulders and core. If you find them too difficult to do with your arms outstretched, move your arms back toward your waist until you're able to do at least a few reps. Because of they are so difficult, these pushups are a great way to end your workout and get that "burn" we're all looking for.

So, the next time you can't make it to the gym, yet you want to get a good upper-body workout in, try these different kinds of pushups — and add resistance if you can. This can be something as light as a book or as heavy as Charlie Sheen's conscience.

Also, remember to fuel your workout with a [Bang® Energy Drink](#) or a [Bang® Keto Coffee](#).

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