

## Time for More Muscle

Michael Lipowski, CFP

Almost every article, book, or study you read, about building muscle has one thing in common. They all attempt to single out one key factor that will result in the attainment of more muscle. Among the factors that often get highlighted for their role in this relentlessly pursued objective are intensity, volume, frequency, weight, rep cadence, hormones, protein, amino acids, carbohydrates, or supplements. We know that no *single* factor by itself will influence our muscle development unless the other factors are applied properly as well, yet we continuously try to establish “the one” which reins supreme above all others. So in order to satisfy your need to find that golden “muscle building nugget” I present you with what I believe to be *thee* key factor for forging new muscle and a compelling case for why *it* really is most important.

The key factor...*time!*

Time plays a crucial role in every significant aspect of muscle development. No matter what you do or how you do it, if your timing is not right all your efforts could be for not—or at the very least you will not get the most from your efforts. Think about that for a moment. Think about all the energy you pour into your training and not getting anything from it. Pretty disheartening I know, but an unfortunate fact for many trainees.

However if the *time* is right...you will be able to optimize your muscular development! Let’s examine the role of time in the muscle building equation.

There are three major areas where time is the determining factor in how effective you are in stimulating gains. The first is in the gym in the form of training efficiency and time under tension (TUT). Some people spend way too much time in the gym and too much of that time is spent inefficiently. If you want to get the most from your body you must train in a way that will not waste valuable energy and resources on non-productive activity. Understand that you could literally workout for 20 minutes and do more to encourage muscle growth than

you could be working out for an hour if you use those 20 minutes effectively. This is where TUT comes into play. Unless your sets are lasting long enough and performed with enough intensity to maximize muscle fiber recruitment and exhaust the muscle's resources (i.e. ATP, glycogen), based on their predominate fiber type and rate of fatigue, then you are not getting as much out of them as you should. The consequence of this is two-fold. First you will need to perform more overall work (exercises/sets) to impose the level of demands needed to stimulate muscle growth. Secondly, by having to perform more overall work to satisfy the muscles needs you invariably place greater stress on your entire system (including your joints, tendons, CNS, and endocrine system) which will negatively affect the next major area of muscle development...recovery!

You've undoubtedly heard it before. It is only during the time you are recovering that you are actually growing. As self explanatory as this seems it is seldom fully understood. There are different phases of recovery—compensation and overcompensation—and there are two things that we must recover from, 1) local stress (muscles and joints) and 2) systemic stress (CNS, endocrine system, lymphatic system, etc.). Compensation is when your level of strength and function returns to what it was prior to your workout(s). Overcompensation is the phase of recovery where your strength and function *exceeds* what it was prior to your workout(s).

If you do not allow for enough time to fully recover and overcompensate both locally and systemically, from the demands of training you will not grow, *no matter how hard or how often you train*. Just because you are not training the same muscle groups on consecutive days or training each muscle group more than once a week, *does not* mean you are getting enough quality recovery. The more workouts you are performing (no matter the muscle group) the more systemic stress you are incurring on top of the stress you incur from daily living. As stress accumulates and compounds, your need for more time between workouts and/or periodic lay-offs from training increases. An extra day or two between training sessions or an entire week off from training might just be what your body needs to permit new muscle growth.

The third "area of importance" is nutrient timing. If you want to take advantage of your efficient workouts, if you want to get the most out of every minute you spend recovering then you must make sure that you are getting the proper nutrients at the proper time. The proteins, carbs, fats, aminos, and supplements you take in before, during, after and in-between workouts is critical to maintaining an anabolic state. Failing to pay attention to your timing in this one

area can not only result in muscle 'unrealized' but muscle 'lost' as you drift into a catabolic state.

As a general recommendation never allow for more than 2 ½ to 3 hours to pass— from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed— without ingesting some form of protein, so that you can maintain a positive nitrogen balance. Be sure to have some carbs (preferably complex, low to moderate GI) at least an hour to two-hours before you train and within an hour after training (ideally these should be fast absorbing, high GI carbs). During your training a mix of aminos and fast absorbing carbs (i.e. dextrose) can be consumed as well.

If you are not realizing the muscle growth you think should be possible or your muscle growth has stagnated despite all the time you have put into its attainment then it's time to examine *time* itself. Are using your time in the gym as efficiently and effectively as possible? If not you might want to start with how you spend your time performing each set. Are you getting everything you can from your muscles every time you touch a weight or are you spending your time doing a lot of sets that do little to stimulate growth (i.e. low to moderate intensity, not-to-failure sets)?

What about when you leave the gym. Can you stay away long enough to allow for overcompensation or do you give in to your insatiable need to "do something" even though it could be working against you? Is your nutrient intake timely enough to support a muscle building environment or do you sabotage your efforts by letting catabolism sneak up on you? The implications of time to amassing muscle are great. Use it wisely.