Top 5 Myths of Muscle Hypertrophy

With the increase in fitness content online, it becomes more difficult to figure out what is good information and what is misinformation. Although everyone's fitness journey is highly individualized, with different goals, diets, and exercises, the biology of muscle hypertrophy is the same for everyone. Here are a few myths that are still perpetuated in the fitness community:

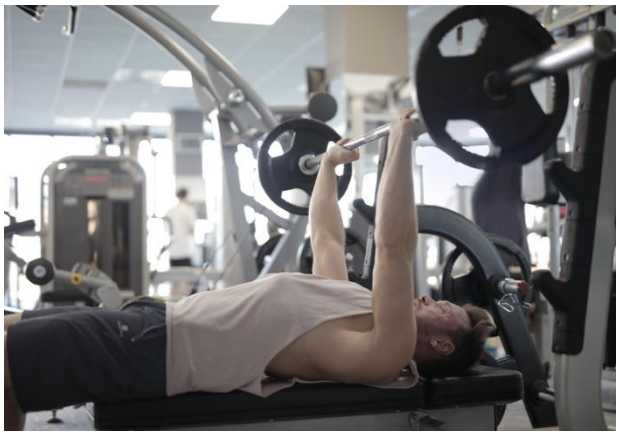
1. You must bulk to gain muscle

Yes, bulking is necessary for individuals that are underweight or advanced lifters, but for most individuals bulking is not necessary for gaining muscle. Most individuals going to the gym are beginners or intermediate weightlifters, if they are training properly and consuming an adequate amount of protein, muscle hypertrophy will occur regardless of calorie intake. Bulking is especially not necessary for overweight individuals, as these individuals already have significant energy stores in the form of fat. Although bulking is not necessary, a moderate caloric surplus 200-300 calories will maximize strength and muscle gains for most weightlifters.

2. Supplements

Like their name, supplements are supplementary, so are not a requirement for muscle hypertrophy. If you are a healthy individual and consuming a well-balanced diet, most supplements are not necessary. Certain supplements are beneficial, such as fish oils and creatine, as an adequate amount cannot be consumed in a regular diet. For all supplements I recommend you consult a doctor or dietician prior to use.

3. Chasing 'the pump'



The greatest bodybuilder of all time, Arnold Schwarzenegger said 'the pump' is one of the most important factors when working out. Although 'the pump' makes you look and feel great, there is relatively little turnover to muscle hypertrophy. 'The pump' is increased blood flow to a muscle due to increased metabolic damage, this increase is sustained for around 30 minutes after exercise. Although increased blood flow does bring more nutrients for muscle hypertrophy, 'the pump' is relatively short-lived as muscle protein synthesis lasts 48-72 hours after exercise.

4. Time Under Tension

Professional bodybuilders in the 90s praised time under tension, performing only the bottom half range of motion of the bench press, only standing halfway up during squats, and excessively long eccentrics. The main issue with this training style is the inability to load a heavy amount of weight. To induce muscle hypertrophy, it is a lot more effective to use a moderate to heavy weight where you can perform full range of motion rather than partial reps. In general, the concentric and eccentric should each be around 1-2sseconds for the full range of motion.

5. The Shock Principle

Another myth created by Arnold Schwarzenegger, stating that you must shock the muscles to create muscle growth. To shock the muscle, you either change the exercise order, exercise selection, or amount of sets/reps. These techniques aren't bad when introduced occasionally, to break up monotony, but in general it is more effective to stick with a handful of exercises that you find work best for you and slowly add more weight or reps every workout.