

fitness



Hauling five bags of groceries requires not just killer arms but

also a strong grip. Can't deal? You might be short-changing your workouts in addition to your pantry stash. Your ability to lug weights without palm or wrist pain plays a big role in ensuring your sweat sessions are effective enough to get your biceps to pop.

When you're lifting heavy (think: enough weight to slow you down during the last two or three reps of a set), "having good grip strength will help you focus on proper form and mechanics, which means you'll be able to push yourself to necessary fatigue levels," says Kat Ellis, CSCS, coach at The Fort in New York City.

Weak hand and wrist muscles are super common, though, according to Liana Tobin, CSCS, a personal trainer educator for the National Strength and Conditioning Association. "When you're doing a workout with challenging weights, grip strength is often the first thing to fail," she says. "That's because it involves smaller muscles that tire quickly, and they're typically trained less frequently."

Toning those micro muscles is beneficial outside the gym too. It can help prevent tendinitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and arthritis, Ellis explains, and yield improvements in fine motor skills. This will make everyday things—hooking your bra, throwing or catching a ball—easier. Cornhole, anyone?

The good news: Getting a better handle on the situation isn't hard. Start doing these moves and you'll be holding your own in no time.

# Get a Grip

Sculpting strong, sexy arms is within your grasp, and targeting your hand muscles can help.

By Mallory Creveling





Aim to strength train your hands and wrists three to five times weekly.

## Clutch Moves at Home

You don't need dumbbells to work your grip strength. Just grab onto these household items to build a stronger handshake in no time.



### STRESS-BALL SQUEEZE

Squish a stress ball (a tennis ball works too) with your entire hand for 5 to 10 pulses. Repeat using just thumb and pointer finger.

Progress through each finger. Switch hands and repeat sequence.



### WRIST ROTATION

Grasp an unopened wine bottle or the handle of a cast-iron pan, keeping upper arm by side and elbow bent 90 degrees. Rotate bottle or pan toward your midline, bring it back to center, then rotate in the opposite direction. Do two or three sets of 20 to 30 reps. Switch hands and repeat.



### BOOK PINCH

Using two books of the same size (preferably coffee-table books or textbooks), grip one in each hand, arms at sides. Squeeze with fingers for 30 seconds, then relax for 30 seconds. Do three to five sets.



### PLATE PINCH

Select two weight plates of the same size and grasp one in each hand between thumb and fingers, arms by sides. Squeeze plates as hard as possible and hold for one minute. Rest for 30 to 60 seconds. Do two or three sets.



### FARMER CARRY

Holding a heavy kettlebell in each hand, arms down by sides, walk forward in a straight line without letting the weights bang against the sides of your legs. Continue for 30 to 60 seconds. Rest for 30 to 60 seconds, then repeat. Do three to five sets.



### LOOPED-BAND PULL-APART

Loop a resistance band around open hands and hold arms straight out in front of you, palms facing each other. Pull hands a few inches away from each other. Hold for three seconds, then release. Do 5 to 10 reps.

## Hang Tough at the Gym

When working with weights, start light and increase the load slowly. "It's an easily injured area, so go for tension but stop if you feel any pain," Tobin says.



## Signs Your Grip Strength Needs Work

- 1 You have trouble carrying grocery bags without putting them down for a break.
- 2 You consistently drop dumbbells or barbells.
- 3 Your hands often cramp.
- 4 You feel grip pain when lifting challenging weights.
- 5 Your hands and forearms fatigue when shoveling snow or walking your dog.
- 6 You get tired from typing on your keyboard.

SHEIN JACKET, SATURDAY SCHOOL, TOP, ZARA PANTS, STEVE MADDEN SNEAKERS, ADINA'S JEWELS EARRINGS, ROXANNE ASSOLIN BRACELETS, OLIVER THOMAS BAG, WILD ONE DOG LEASHES AND HARNESSES