

With the ever-growing number of weight rooms springing up across the country and around the world, more and more people are getting into the world of bodybuilding and fitness. Unfortunately, many of these people come in with little prior knowledge or experience, and they often end up hurting themselves in the gym. Here are 4 Tips you can use right away to avoid weight lifting injuries and ensure longevity for your joints and muscles.

Practice Good Form

More important than any special technique or piece of equipment for avoid injury in the weight room is good form. Likewise, the number one problem with people with weight lifting injuries is probably bad form.

To avoid lower back problems, make sure your back is arched, NOT ROUNDED, for pretty much every exercise that you do. Not only will these keep your lower back from getting injured with even the heaviest of loads, but it will force you to be nice and strict on most of your movements.

To avoid shoulder problems, simply do not place them in compromising positions. Certain movements such as upright rows, which have you vertically pulling items from the ground towards your head should be avoided. You should probably also avoid doing behind-the-neck movements.

Use Wraps and Sleeves

There are a wide variety of wraps and sleeves that you can use to protect your knees, elbows and wrists. They help keep the joints warm and loose, so that you don't injure or reinjure them doing certain movements.

For squats and other leg movements, I would advise knee sleeves. They keep your knees very warm and comfortable and do not give you any help on exercises. You could go with some knee wraps if you wanted, but they will give you possibly unwanted support on squats and leg presses. They also take time and energy to wrap for every set.

For pretty much all pressing and extension movements, you should invest in some elbow sleeves and wrist wraps. The elbow sleeves keep your elbows warm and free from injury in movements that involve rotation about that joint

The wrist wraps keep your wrists locked in a safe position. You do not want to be doing heavy dips or bench presses and have unprotected wrists give out on you. This poses a danger both to that specific joint, as well as to your whole body.

Work Your Back

The number one way to improve shoulder health and prevent upper body joint problems is to do a lot of upper back work. Pulling with your arms is the direct opposite of pushing movements such as bench presses and dips. Doing these exercises helps to balance out the muscles and the wear and tear on the joints.

Your first order of business for working your back is to simply spend as much, if not more time doing pull-ups and rows as you do various pressing movements. A big, thick, wide back will go a long way in preventing upper body joint problems.

The other thing you should do is work specifically for your traps and rear delts. My favorite movement for this purpose is the face pull. Take a rope attachment and connect it to a pulley set at the highest setting on the cable stack. Pull towards your face. I do this movement for a few sets every time I am in the gym, and it has been great for my shoulder health.

Choose Your Exercises Carefully

Finally, you must only do exercises that don't injure you! It seems like a no-brainer, but I see many stubborn people continue to do movements that are obviously making their joint problems worse.

You should make sure you are doing some type of squat and deadlift, though. Some people whine and complain about how these exercises "hurt their back," but they are usually just wimping out. Use a belt, wraps, etc. to make some variation of each of these movements doable for you.

As far as pressing movements go, you do not HAVE to do the flat barbell bench press. While it is definitely one of the best upper-body builders out there, there are other pressing movements you can use. If your shoulders always hurt on the bench, ditch it and do inclines, declines, dumbbell presses, etc.