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Preliminary Isometric Tension Improves the Effectiveness of Dynamic Work by up to 20%

By Hristo Hristov

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Are you looking for a simple and effective way to increase your strength? This article will show you how to incorporate isometrics into your training regime to increase the strength of your favorite lifts.

Soviet research, dating back to the sixties of the 20th century, points out that isometric training preceding dynamic work may increase its effectiveness by up to 20%. This is called the "immediate after effect" of isometric training. When the reverse sequence of training was tested (dynamic work preceding isometric work), results actually deteriorated.

According to Mel Siff's "Supertraining", the after effect occurs immediately after the preliminary isometric tension. Strength continues to increase and peaks between the 10th to 20th minute. To maximize the strength boost, I recommend performing isometric holds 15–17 minutes before the hardest sets of dynamic work. Doing so will synchronize the strength after-effect peak with the hardest part of the training session. Example: consider a training session that consists of high-volume Bench Presses and Deadlifts. Iso-Bench-Presses should be performed 15 minutes before the hardest sets of Bench Presses and Iso-Deadlifts should be performed 15 minutes before the hardest sets of Deadlifts.

The intensity of the isometrics should be carefully selected for maximum results. Tensing at 50% of the max intensity should produce the greatest strength gains. Elite athletes may perform better at higher intensities.

One last question remains: how to select the most performance-enhancing isometric position for a given dynamic exercise? Here you have two choices: the isometric drill should train either the weakest position of your lift, or the position where the involved muscles are maximally stretched (sometimes your weakest position is your maximally stretched one). This recommendation has to do with the long term strength effect of isometrics. It makes sense to strengthen the weakest position in a lift, because a chain is as strong as its weakest link. Improving the strength of a muscle in its most lengthened position, has a distinct strength carryover to shorter muscle lengths. Therefore isometric training at

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stretched positions, should improve the strength through the whole range of motion!

The training protocol that I have mostly used is 3 sets x 10 sec isometric holds at 50% of the max effort with 10–30 seconds rest in between.

Let's give specific examples of isometric exercises. For the bench press, load the bar with 50% of your max, lower it 1–3 inches above chest level, and hold for 10 seconds. Rest 30 seconds and repeat 3 times. For the deadlift, simply pull on the bar with 50% effort, without moving it at all. For the squat put 50% of your max, squat down to the lowest position you train, and sit there for 10 seconds. Don't forget to push your feet into the ground to activate all the squatting muscles. Imagine that you are squatting up, but don't move.

Here's the overall protocol again:

perform 3 sets of 10 sec isometric holds at 50% intensity
the isometric exercise should train the weakest or the maximally stretched position of the corresponding dynamic drill
the isometric exercise should be executed 15–17 minutes before the hardest set of the corresponding dynamic drill

You may find that during the isometric holds you start sweating :] That's because they are a great way to warm up the whole body. You get a dynamic strength boost + a great warm up.

Preliminary isometric tension has these three advantages:

it warms up the body
it has an immediate positive effect on your dynamic strength
it has a long term positive effect on your lifts

You can utilize preliminary iso tension on your max testing days. Here is the scenario: you are testing your Bench Press max. Load 50% of your projected max. Perform 3 sets of 10 sec holds in the position where the bar is 1–3 inches above chest level (rest 10–30 sec between sets). In the next 15 minutes, perform 2–5 sets of 1–2 reps gradually increasing the weight to around 90%. Example:

Rest 3 minutes, 2x50%
Rest 3 minutes, 2x70%
Rest 3 minutes, 1x80%
Rest 3 minutes, 1x85%
Rest 3 minutes, 1x90%, Rest 3 minutes

Psyche up, and go for your projected max. Good luck.

Hristo Hristov owns X3MSoftware, a company specializing in developing diet and fitness tracking software. Hristo has a degree in Computer Science and passion for strength training. Hristo has designed and written Fitness Assistant, X3MSoftware's leading software product. Download your demo

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Are You Suffering From Tension Headache?

By Ashish Jain

Whether headache is the cause of tension or the tension is the cause of headache? Think over...if their origin is due to the common cause?

Well, the dividing line between tension and headache is thin.

The tension headache is the unique and generous gift of high paced life style of the modern world. Most of the people caught in the grip of this civilization are out to run an endless marathon that has no end. Many of these crazy run ups end on stretchers, ambulances and ICUs in the hospital. Tension headaches are directly responsible for this sorry state of affair.

What is the source of these tensions? An individual, on a normal working day is connected to his family, his friends and his office. Any serious tension in any of these places is the direct cause of their tension headache.

The causes of tension headache may be simple or complex. Your son's poor percentage in the higher secondary examination, and his inability to get admission in any of the reputed Colleges might become a major reason for your tension headache. Well, any kind of stress or worry could be the root of your tension. This is why tension headache is the most common form of headache.

Herein, the tension type headache is not to be confused with any of the serious forms of headache. Tension headache could be due to a single factor. The moment a solution is found to the problem, it disappears.

You may not need any treatment or medicine for this type of tension headache. This headache can be compared to the sharp, passing showers. It comes and it goes. But if you experience intense pain when you have such headaches, you need to consult your doctor immediately.

How to treat the tension headache? The correct treatment is to go to the root cause of the tension and treat that cause. When that cause is satisfactorily resolved, the headache is also gone.

And last but not the least, solving your tension headache through over the counter medications is neither the correct nor the recommended solution for it. At best, this can be described as a temporary solution. The effect of headache will reappear again.

So, learn to be at peace with yourself to treat this peculiar headache. Find a solution in the activities that pleasure you. You may read some lessons on right type of living as well. For, good literature many a times solves the riddles of tension.

& Tension Headache provides detailed information

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on headache, natural headache relief, headache treatment, tension headache and more.



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