

Build a Better Body

Review of the Iron Gym Xtreme

A.K.A "Iron Gym Total Upper Body Workout Bar"

The Iron Gym Xtreme pull-up bar

This is not to be confused with the regular Iron Gym, which had some limitations in movement compared to other pull-up bars (like the P90X pull up bar, the one I was encouraged to get for the P90X program but it costs a lot more (\$100)!

I wanted a pull-up bar I could use with the P90X exercise program. There was no way I was going to pay \$100 for a chin-up bar, as nice as it may look:

The P90X pull-up bar has the full range of motion but is too expensive.

Check out all those ways to grip on that bar. You can do more than just close-grip pull-ups, you can also do wide grip, which is great for the back and shoulders. Since P90X is the program I'm going to use this with, I needed a good substitute to that bar that has all the same features.

When I looked online, I saw the regular Iron Gym bar, that had tons of favorable reviews, was the one that was "As seen on TV", and only costs \$29.99. Then there was the Iron Gym Xtreme, which looked exactly like the P90X bar, only costs \$39.99, but was so new it had no reviews.

Iron Gym Xtreme vs. Iron Gym Regular

I weigh 245 pounds. This thing says it can hold 300 pounds. I believe that. My real concern was could my house handle my weight? Is the doorframe strong enough to handle me, or am I going to come tumbling down with trim & nails?

I have full faith that this thing will stay put over the doorframe as long as my doorframe holds. Maybe I didn't have a lot of faith in my house. As of this writing, I really still don't (more on that later).

Still, I read almost all of the 128 reviews of the original Iron Gym when the original was still on Amazon (for some reason, I don't see it there anymore). There were a couple of people who were in my weight range who voiced the same concern, but then said, "yes, it holds." Not once have I seen anyone state, "Well, my house came crashing down."

I figured the Xtreme version would hold up just as well, so I bought it.

2 weeks later, it arrives.

I got the box and put it on my table:

After assembling it (about 15 minutes), I put it on the floor:

But there was this one piece that I had no idea what it went to. I thought I had left something out during assembly:

It turns out that piece slides between your trim and the wall, and helps keep the Iron Gym in place. Don't worry - it's not screwed or hammered in - easily removable.

Please note that the Iron Gym is meant to fit in doorframes of a certain width. My doorway thickness is about six inches. If yours is greatly different, beware. Also, if your trim isn't 3.5 inches wide, just be aware that it might not fit. Your doorway must have trim for the Iron Gym to stay in place.

The doorway I'm using it in is very close to the next wall, so the Iron Gym barely fits. It's best to have a bit of space on either side of the door so that the Iron Gym handles aren't scraping up against a wall. So rule of thumb, if your door trip butts right up next to the wall, that's not a good door way to use this in.

Let me be frank - I'm still scared to use this thing with my full weight (245 pounds). Not because I don't trust the Iron Gym, but because I don't trust my own house.

I grabbed the handles and slowly lifted my feet off the ground. I heard my house give a tiny bump of stress, but it held very firm. I did one pull up and let myself back down. I lifted the Iron Gym off the trim and there were no black marks left on the wall.

For now in my workouts, I put a chair in the door and leave one leg on the chair while I use the Iron Gym. This helps me for two reasons:

1. I'm weak and can't do more than a couple of reps with my full body weight.
2. I have peace of mind in that I'm not putting great stress on my house.

Luckily, in the P90X program, the one-leg-on-the-chair method is actually a recommended approach for beginners (like me).

This thing does what it says and supports people as heavy as me. It's a great substitute for more expensive chin-up bars. I like it a lot - I feel it in my workouts. I'm still cautious about my house but that issue is inside my head, not any problem with the product at all. I would buy this thing again no question!

Build Stronger Legs Using the Lunges

Lunges are one of those exercises that you either learn to love or you always dislike. Like the squat, the lunge is a great exercise for the legs. It is probably often overlooked in most people's leg workouts. Besides strengthening the legs, lunges are also used for aesthetic purposes (nice legs and butt!)

Benefits of the lunge exercise

1. Works the quadriceps and hamstrings
2. Works the glutes
3. Develops balance and stability
4. Works large muscles, thus burns more calories
5. Strengthens the knee
6. Develop better posture
7. You can do them almost anywhere (no gym equipment)

Variations of lunges

There are several ways in which to perform the lunge depending on how difficult you want the exercise to be.

- a. Standing lunge (alternate each leg or one leg at a time)
- b. Lunging on an incline (using a bench)
- c. Weighted lunge (using dumbbells or barbell)
- d. Walking lunge (walking with lunging steps)

It's important to have good technique when performing the lunge. You don't want to extend your knee past your toes. It's also important to keep your back straight and to not lean forward as you lunge. Adding weight is not necessary when you're starting out. It's better to focus on developing form and using your body weight before becoming advanced.

Boost Your Summer Workout With Caffeine

Good news! Caffeine may be the perfect complement to your workouts. Several recent studies have found that a small dose before exercising helps improve performance, and a few cups of the strong stuff after a tough workout can help your muscles recover more quickly.

In a recent Australian study of both recreational and advanced runners, those who took about 95 milligrams of caffeine (about the equivalent of an 8 ounce cup of coffee) improved their 5K times by an average of 10 to 12 seconds.

Back in May 2008, Spanish researchers reported that hot, dehydrated cyclists who downed caffeine with their water and carbs could pedal harder for a longer time in steamy weather—the first study to specifically simulate summertime temperatures. The scientists think caffeine stimulates muscles, thereby helping to offset heat-related fatigue.

One study found that glycogen, the muscle's primary fuel source, is replenished more quickly when athletes ingest both carbohydrate and caffeine following high-intensity workouts. Cyclists who drank large amounts of caffeine along with carbs had 66% more glycogen in their muscles four hours after biking until exhausted, compared to when they consumed carbohydrate alone. It seems that caffeine may speed up the blood's transportation of glucose to the muscles.

I've always heard that caffeine can be dehydrating, so I posed the question to Nancy Clark, RD, author of the Sports Nutrition Guidebook, Fourth Edition (2008). "While once deemed true, we now know that coffee is not dehydrating, a moderate intake of coffee, cola, and other caffeinated beverages do count toward fluid needs, if you are accustomed to consuming caffeine in your diet."

Caffeine also stimulates the brain and improves concentration; there's even evidence that drinking coffee may help you live longer, and smelling it may relieve stress. But be careful just how much caffeine you're getting and where it's coming from: While black coffee and plain tea have no calories, extras like cream, sugar, and flavored syrups—can quickly counteract your fitness goals.

"Don't just assume you will perform better with a caffeine boost: You might just end up nauseated, coping with a 'coffee stomach,' or suffering from caffeine jitters at a time when you are already nervous and anxious," Clark warns. "Experiment during training to determine if a caffeinated beverage or plain water is your best bet."

A moderate caffeine intake is considered to be about 250 milligrams per day, or two to three cups of coffee daily; most experts agree that a cup or two of java or iced tea—an hour before your daily walk, run, or workout session—can make the task seem easier.