
Beautiful Biceps

The biceps are traditionally the most glorified of all muscles. Shapely biceps are a symbol of fitness and strength, apparent whenever you flex your arm. In combination with the triceps, they give your arms an eye-catching appearance and make you look great in any sleeveless outfit.

The biceps also are essential in carrying out many of life's daily chores. You use your biceps in almost every lifting action, whether you are picking up your kids, putting groceries in your car, or rearranging your furniture. By strengthening this muscle group, you'll be able to perform these tasks more easily, improving your overall quality of life.

Bodysculpting Routine

The biceps is a two-headed muscle that sits on the top portion of your upper arm. Most women do not store significant amounts of body fat in this area (as opposed to the triceps region, where fat is readily deposited), so they tend to notice biceps development more quickly than development in other muscles.

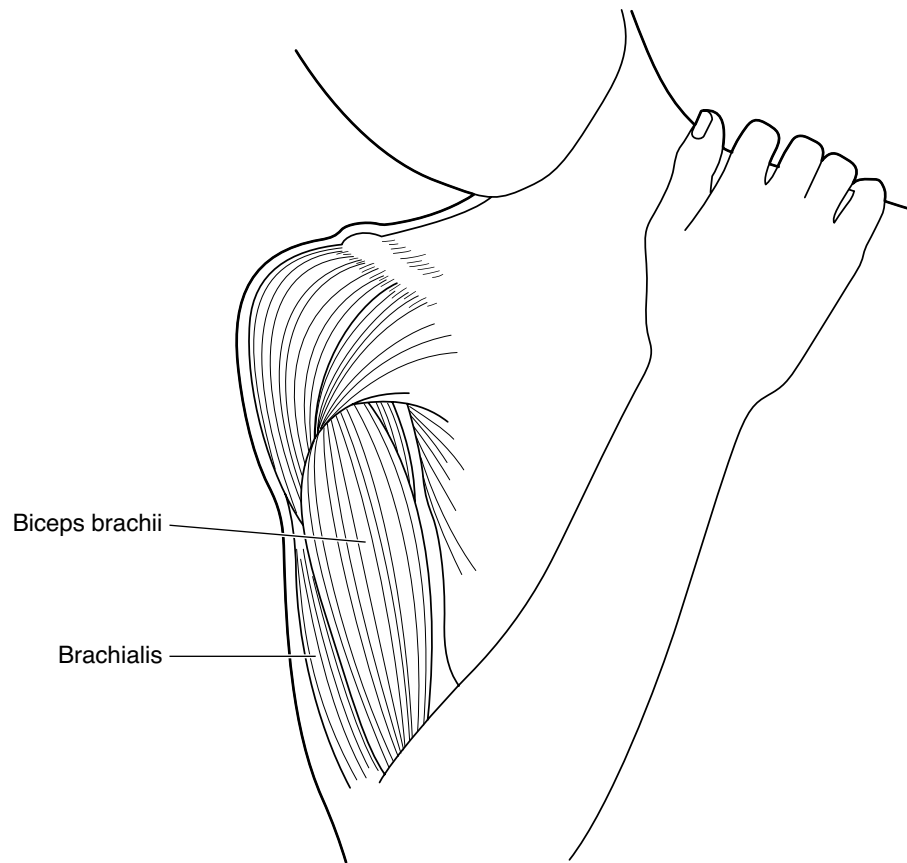
Because the long head of the biceps crosses the shoulder (glenohumeral) joint, it is more active during exercises where the shoulder is extended (elbows behind the body) and less active where the shoulder is flexed (elbows in front of the body). What's more, varying the grip used influences muscular stress to the area: exercises that employ a supinated grip (palms facing toward your body maximize stress to the biceps, while exercises that use a neutral grip (palms facing each other) shift the emphasis away from the biceps and allow the brachialis to take over a majority of the work. Accordingly, exercises for the biceps are classified both by whether stretch is applied to the long head and by the grip used in performance.

- **Group 1**—incline curls, seated curls, EZ curls, and similar variations. These movements target the long head of the biceps (which sits on the outer portion of your upper arm) by increasing the stretch of the muscle. As a rule, the more your elbows are pulled behind your body, the greater the stress to the long head (that is, incline curls target the long head more than seated curls). Developing the long head adds height to the biceps and makes your arms really stand out when viewed from the side.

BULKING UP

Weight training can sculpt the body many different ways. You can structure a weight-training routine to add mass, increase strength, improve muscular tone, or change your body in many other ways. Contrary to popular opinion, most women find it extremely difficult to add a significant amount of muscle. (Many men have the same difficulty.) Nearly all women do not have the capacity to become extremely muscular, primarily due to low testosterone levels.

Moreover, although it can take years to develop a muscular physique, it is relatively easy to reduce muscle mass. Simply taking time off from training or reducing intensity will result in muscular atrophy. Hence, worrying that you will get too big or muscular from training should be the least of your concerns.



■ Muscles of the biceps.

- **Group 2**—preacher curls, concentration curls, prone incline curls, and similar variations. These movements limit the stretch of the long head, thereby emphasizing the short head to a greater extent. This area of the biceps is on the inner portion of your upper arm and helps to give the muscle a full, rounded appearance.

- **Group 3**—hammer curls and similar variations. These movements use a neutral grip (palms facing one another) and therefore target the brachialis, a complementary muscle of the biceps that is involved in elbow flexion. The brachialis sits between your biceps and triceps and helps give detail to your upper

arm. Moreover, when properly developed, it helps to delineate the contour of your biceps and triceps, producing a well-defined line between the two.

Bodysculpting Tips

1. For a different feel, you can perform curls with a pronated grip (palms facing away from your body). This shifts emphasis much more to the forearm muscles. But unless you really need extra forearm work, use this grip sparingly, mostly for variety.

2. It is often beneficial to use an EZ-curl bar, rather than a straight bar, when performing barbell exercises. The EZ-curl bar is curved to allow a natural tilt of the wrist. This can help alleviate pressure on the wrist joint—a common weak spot for women—making curling exercises more comfortable to execute.

3. The biceps are active in exercises for the back, receiving secondary stress in virtually all back-related movements. Moreover, they are a relatively small muscle complex, requiring limited training volume for maximal stimulation. Hence, you must use caution in working these muscles to avoid overtraining. If you find that your biceps are not responding the way you would like, reduce the overall training volume, frequency, or both to allow more time for recuperation.

4. Genes determine the length of your biceps. If you have a short biceps muscle and a long biceps tendon, there is little you can do to lengthen the muscle (sorry, but that's the way it is). By adequately developing this area, however, you can offset a short biceps muscle by creating the illusion of fullness in the region where the muscle tapers off.

TABLE 9.1 EXERCISES FOR THE BICEPS

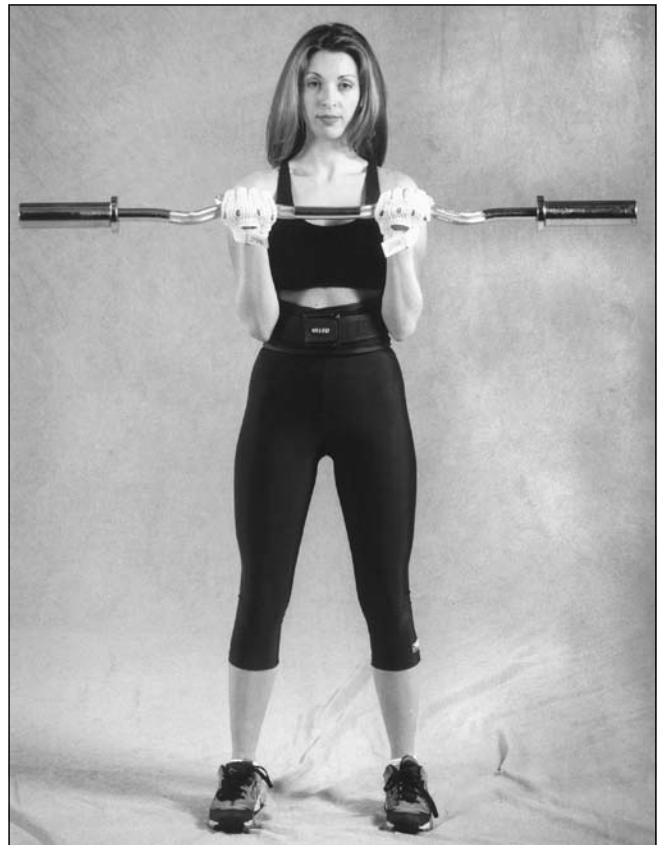
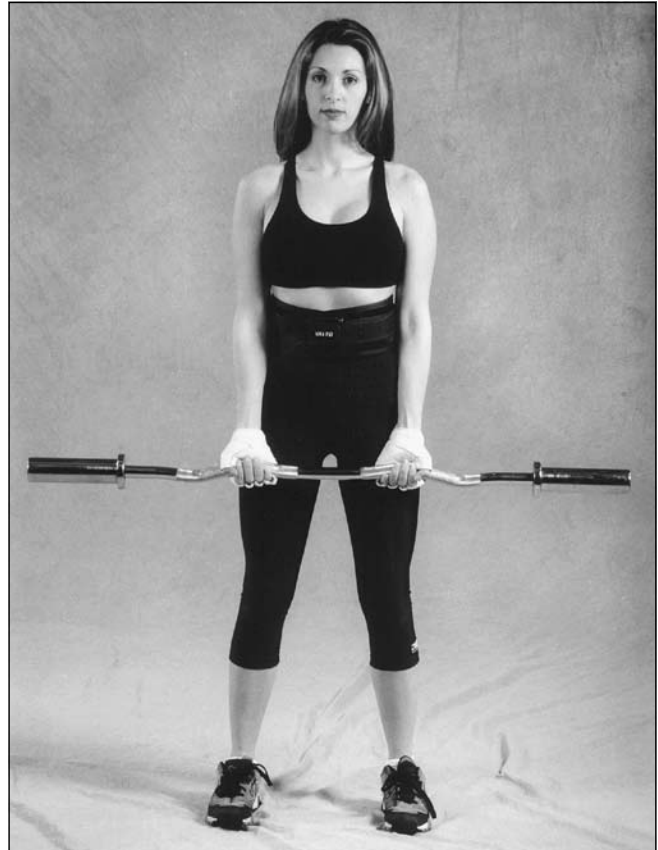
GROUP	EXERCISES
Group 1	Standing EZ curl 21s with EZ-curl bar Seated dumbbell curl Cable curl Incline curl
Group 2	Preacher curl One-arm dumbbell preacher curl Concentration curl Prone incline curl
Group 3	Hammer curl Cable-rope hammer curl Machine hammer curl Incline hammer curl

TABLE 9.2 SAMPLE TARGETED WORKOUTS FOR THE BICEPS

WORKOUT	IN THE GYM		AT HOME	
	Exercise	Sets	Exercise	Sets
1	Incline curl (p. 101)	3	Incline curl (p. 101) supersetted with prone incline curl (p. 105)	3
	One-arm dumbbell preacher curl (p. 103)	3	Cable-rope hammer curl (p. 107)	2
	Hammer curl (p. 106)	2		
2	Cable curl (p. 100) supersetted with prone incline curl (p. 105)	2	Seated dumbbell curl (p. 99)	3
	Incline hammer curl (p. 109)	3	Preacher curl (p. 102)	2
			Hammer curl (p. 106)	2
3	Seated dumbbell curl (p. 99) supersetted with preacher curl (p. 102) and cable-rope hammer curl (p. 107)	2		
4	Standing EZ curl (p. 97)	3		
	Prone incline curl (p. 105)	2		
	Machine hammer curl (p. 108)	2		

STANDING EZ CURL

I prefer this movement to the straight-bar curl because it alleviates pressure on the wrists. Begin by grasping an EZ-curl bar with a palms-up, shoulder-width grip. Maintain a slight bend of your knees and press your elbows into your sides, keeping them stable throughout the move. Slowly curl the bar up toward your shoulders, and contract your biceps at the top of the move. Then slowly reverse direction and return to the start position.

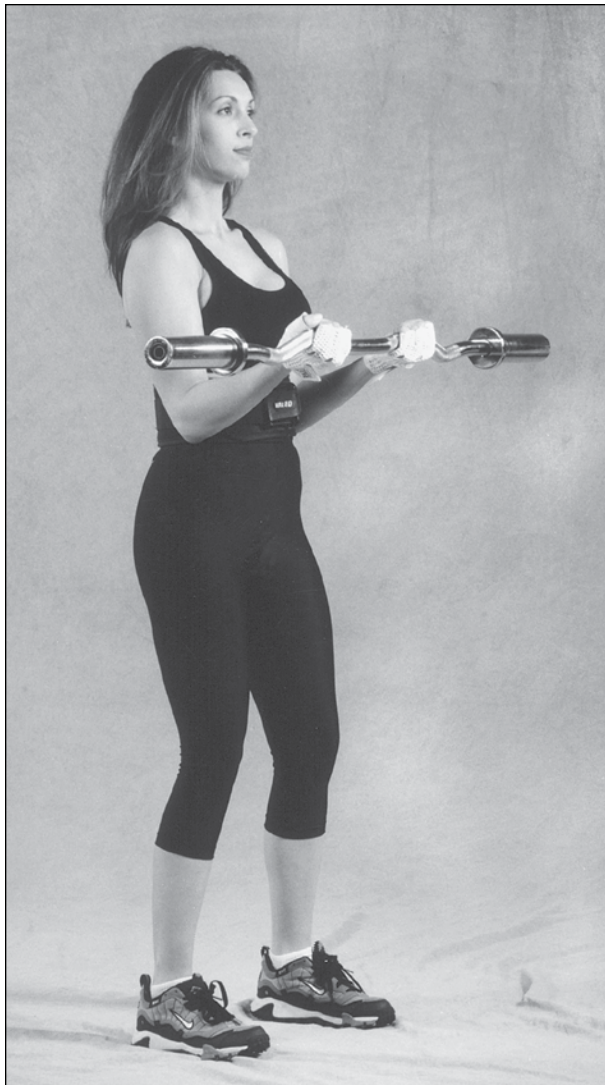


BICEPS EXERCISES

DVD

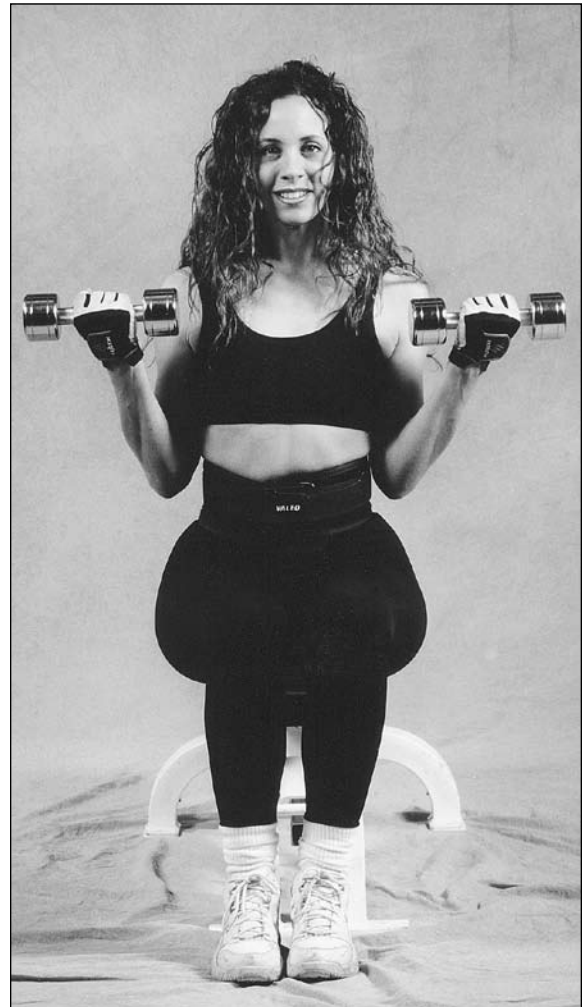
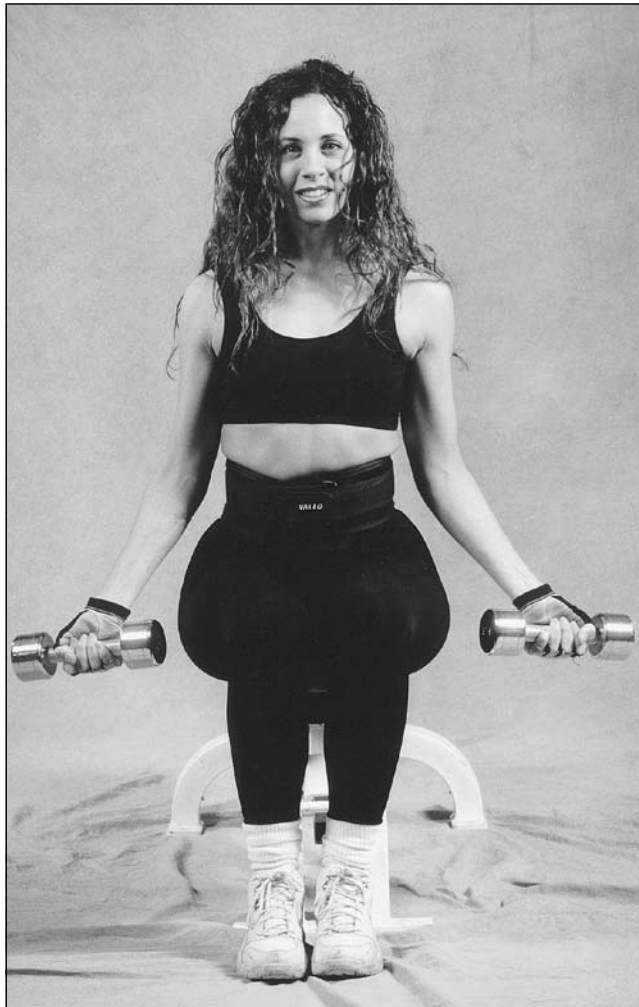
21S WITH EZ-CURL BAR

This is a cool variation of the standard curl that allows you to improve strength at your weak point in the move. Begin by grasping an EZ-curl bar with your hands shoulder-width apart and your palms facing up. Slightly bend your knees and press your elbows to your sides, keeping them stable through the move. Slowly curl the bar until your elbows are at a 90-degree angle. Return to the start position. After performing seven reps, curl the bar to a 90-degree angle, then slowly curl the weight to your shoulders. Perform seven reps of curls to your shoulders, returning only to the 90-degree start position. Finally, lower the bar fully and perform seven complete reps, bringing the weight to shoulder level and returning to a fully-stretched position.



SEATED DUMBBELL CURL

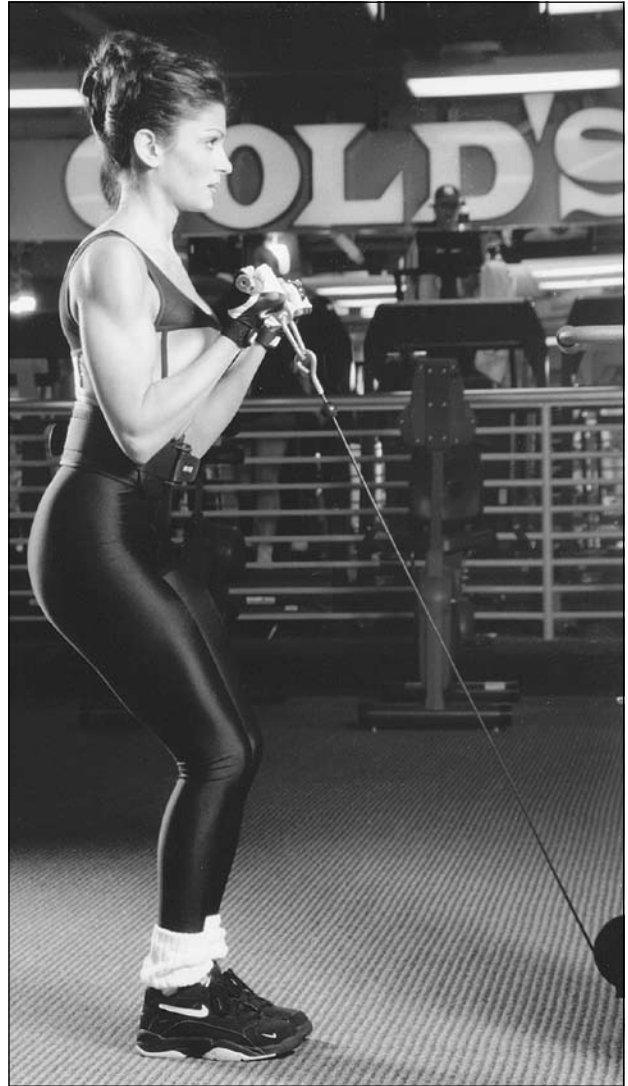
This is a good, basic biceps developer. Begin by sitting at the edge of a flat bench. Grasp a pair of dumbbells and allow them to hang at your sides with your palms facing forward. Press your elbows into your sides and keep them stable throughout the move. Slowly curl the dumbbells up toward your shoulders, and contract your biceps at the top of the move. Then slowly reverse direction and return to the start position.



BICEPS EXERCISES

CABLE CURL

This is one of my favorite biceps exercises. Begin by grasping a straight bar attached to a low pulley. Using a palms-up, shoulder-width grip, slightly bend your knees and press your elbows to your sides, stabilizing them through the move. Slowly curl the bar toward your shoulders, and contract your biceps at the top of the move. Return to the start position.



INCLINE CURL

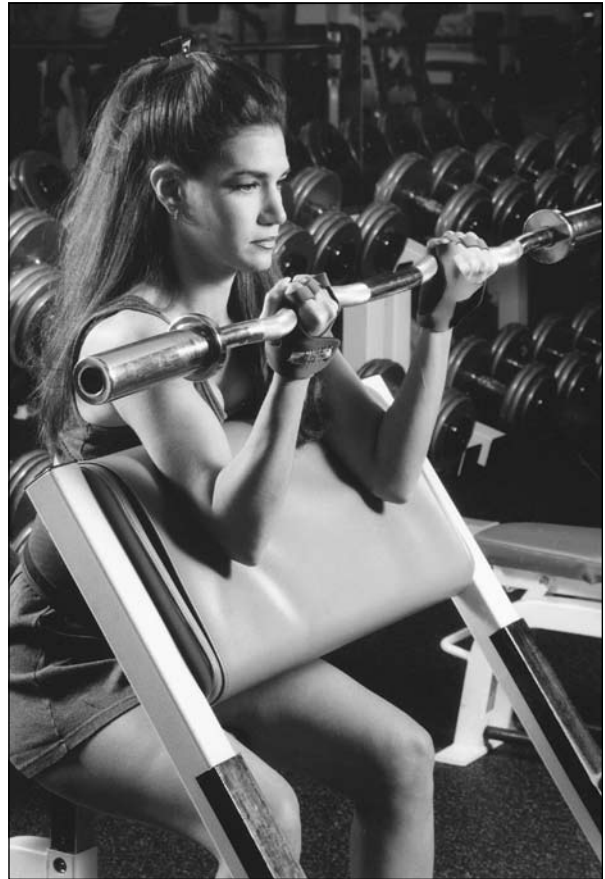
This exercise really targets the long head of the biceps. Begin by lying back on a 45-degree incline bench. Grasp two dumbbells and allow the weights to hang by your hips with your palms facing forward. Keeping your upper arm stable, slowly curl the dumbbells upward toward your shoulders. Make sure your elbows stay back throughout the movement. Contract your biceps, and then slowly return the weights back to the start position.



BICEPS EXERCISES

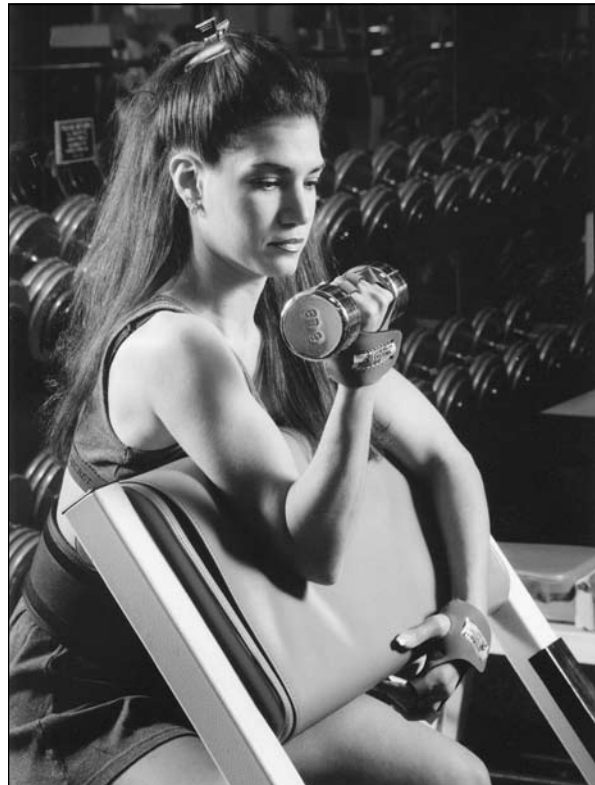
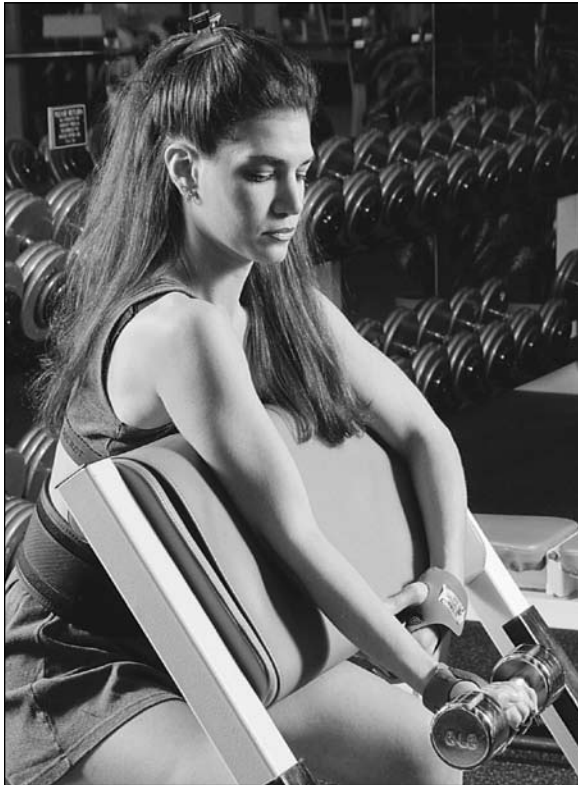
PREACHER CURL

Begin by grasping an EZ-curl bar and placing your upper arms on top of the pad of a preacher bench. Keeping your upper arms stationary, slowly curl the bar toward your shoulders. Contract your biceps at the top of the move. Reverse direction, returning to the start position.



ONE-ARM DUMBBELL PREACHER CURL

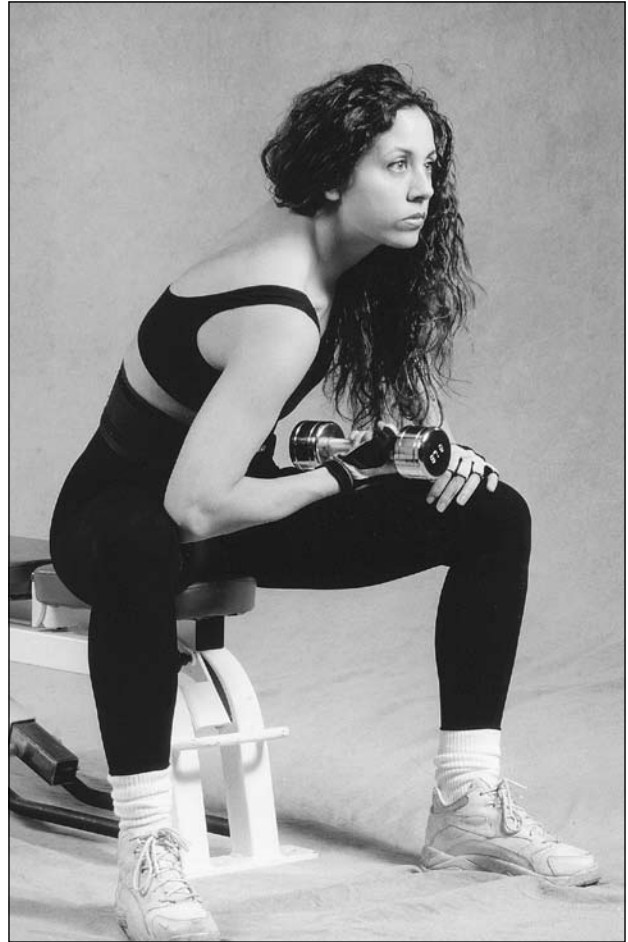
Begin by grasping a dumbbell with your right hand. Place the upper portion of your right arm on an incline bench and allow your right forearm to extend just short of locking the elbow. Keeping your upper arm pressed to the bench, slowly curl the dumbbell upward toward your shoulder. Contract your biceps, and then slowly return the weight back to the start position. After completing the desired number of reps, repeat the process with your left arm.



BICEPS EXERCISES

CONCENTRATION CURL

Begin by sitting at the edge of a flat bench with your legs wide apart. Grasp a dumbbell in your right hand and brace your right triceps on the inside of your right knee. Straighten your right arm so that it hangs down near the floor. Slowly curl the weight up and in along the line of your body, contracting your biceps at the top of the move. Then, slowly reverse direction and return to the start position. After completing the desired number of reps, repeat the process with your left arm.



PRONE INCLINE CURL

This unique move is one of the best for targeting the short head of the biceps. Begin by lying face down on a 45-degree incline bench. Grasp two dumbbells and allow the weights to hang straight down from your shoulders with your palms facing forward. Slowly curl the dumbbells upward toward your shoulders, keeping your upper arms stable throughout the movement. Contract your biceps, and then slowly return the weights back to the start position.

