Many athletes and coaches associate the incline bench with a chest workout, in particular, the incline bench press exercise. However, this piece of equipment can be very versatile, especially when lifting facilities are limited. The following are some excellent ways to fully utilize the incline bench.

**Tricep Extensions.** Begin in the same starting position as for the pullovers. Using either a straight bar or an E-Z curl bar, lower the weight toward the top of the head. Be careful to keep the elbows stationary and pointing upward. Care must also be taken not to hit the top of the head with the weight.

**Pullovers.** Using either a straight bar, an E-Z curl bar, or a dumbbell, the weight is held directly overhead. With a controlled motion, the weight is lowered behind the head until the shoulders are fully flexed. The weight is then returned to the starting position.

**Incline Dumbbell Flies.** This exercise is excellent for isolating the upper chest region. The dumbbells should be lowered to shoulder level, while the elbows remain slightly bent throughout the entire exercise. The lifter’s palms usually face each other.

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Photo 1. Tricep extensions

Photo 2. Pullovers
other, although a palms-away grip can also be used. An interesting variation of this exercise can be done by placing the bench in the middle of a cable cross-over machine. Using the bottom handles, a similar lifting action can be obtained. The main difference in this variation is that the tension is maintained at the top position.

**Preacher Curls.** If a preacher curl stand is not available, a one-arm dumbbell preacher curl can be performed at the top of an incline bench. One limitation is that full extension of the arm may not be possible.

**Rear Deltoid Flies.** Lying face down on the bench, the athlete raises a pair of dumbbells laterally. This exercise is similar to bent-over flies, but eliminates body sway. As a result, relatively light weights are usually adequate.

**Incline Curls.** The biceps can be effectively worked with this exercise. Using dumbbells, the weight is curled to shoulder height with either a palms-forward or a thumbs-up grip. Remember to keep the elbows stationary throughout the lift. (See also "Exercise Methods Notebook", *NSCA Journal*. 8(4):81.)

**Incline Dumbbell Press.** This exercise is similar to the incline barbell press. A greater stretch can be obtained with dumbbells. Also, greater coordination is necessary using dumbbells. In the event of a strength imbalance between the right and left sides, the use of dumbbells will allow each side to do an equal amount of work.

**Incline Barbell Press.** This exercise is probably the most popular of the incline bench exercises. It is excellent for developing the upper chest region (pectoralis major) and the anterior deltoids. If your bench does not have attached uprights, a set of squat racks can be set on either side, or the bench can be set in front of a power rack. (See also "Exercise Methods Notebook", *NSCA Journal*. 5(1): 69.)

Photo 3. Cable flies

Photo 4. Preacher curls

Photo 5. Rear deltoid flies