

PushX3 – Elevating the Push Up

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I've seen plenty of fitness devices come and go. Often, they make outrageous claims that don't even hint at a scientific line of thought behind them. Sometimes, they're just too simple to actually do any good. Others go to the opposite end of the spectrum and totally over-complicate the extremely straightforward act of *moving*.

Sometimes, though, a product manages to hit the fitness nail right on its muscular head. By combining two solid training concepts, the **PushX3** has managed to find that mythical sweet spot, the rare place that makes a device completely and undeniably useful.

Simply put, the **PushX3** is the newest iteration of push up handle. There have been many of these products over the years and plenty of people create their own makeshift designs out of everything from books to dumbbells. But the **PushX3** puts a different spin on the idea by merging it with another proven training tool: Unstable surfaces.

Before we delve into that, though, why should you bother with any kind of push up handle? I'll tell you why.

Getting A Grip

The classic push up position tends to put a lot of strain on the wrist since these relatively small joints are now bent at an extreme angle and simultaneously asked to carry about 60 percent of your body weight. This is even more of a problem if, like me, you deal with ganglion cysts or other issues that cause weakness in the wrist.

Then, of course, you have the issue of push up variations that make things even worse for the poor joint. Wide arm placement or hip push-ups only put more stress on your wrists, making lots of people shy from them, or avoid them completely – which is a shame because these are valuable, effective exercises.

Enter the push up handle. Regardless of what type you use, having a handle allows you to straighten your wrist and therefore lighten its load. The **PushX3**, though, has the added benefit of instability and rotation to increase shoulder activation and keep your wrists comfortable throughout the movement.

While the **PushX3** makes things easier on your wrists, it can also make the push up a much more effective exercise.

Stability Through Instability

Instability training is a pretty classic idea, used in gyms and physical therapist offices worldwide. The thought is that by performing an exercise on an unstable surface you force the muscles to react in new ways that will build your balance and more encourage muscle activation.

Granted, this technique has been taken to a bit of an extreme – with people going so far as to perform barbell squats while standing on a stability ball – it still has merit.

Looking specifically at the push up, a 2013 study published in the Journal of Physical Therapy Science found that push-ups performed on an unstable surface have a great beneficial impact on the trapezius muscles. Other studies have also shown an increased activation of the deltoids. Essentially, then, push-ups done on an unstable surface will much more effectively target your shoulders, improving both strength and stability.

But a lot more muscles are at work during a push up than just your shoulders and chest, even though they tend to be the stars of the show. Remember: the ever-popular plank consists entirely of the upper-most position of a push up. Using the **PushX3** to put your hands on an unstable surface while you go about your normal plank-based abdominal workout will challenge all of the muscles of your core as they attempt to maintain balance.

Which brings us to one really cool fact about the **PushX3**: Its versatility.

Decisions, Decisions

Depending on you how you count them, there are well over 100 different ways to do a push up – each with their own unique benefits. So, don't think that the **PushX3** *only* lets you do push-ups.

From the basic plank position you can expand into side planks, upward/downward dog, mountain climbers and all sorts of colorfully named core exercises.

But let us not forget the fact that on some surfaces the **PushX3** has the ability to slide. This may seem like a relatively unimportant feature, but it can make a huge difference in your workout. Bodyweight flies and core rollouts, as well as plenty of other mobile exercises now become available.

Add all this to the fact the **PushX3** has no mechanisms to break and is totally portable and you now have an easily accessible gym-less workout wherever you are.

Ultimately, there's a ton of things you can do from the basic push up position. The **PushX3**, though, brings adds an element of challenge while opening up even more options and increasing the effectiveness of your workouts.

Sources

<http://myweb.facstaff.wvu.edu/chalmers/PDFs/Unstable%20surfaces.pdf>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24259864>

Jonathan Thompson is a Certified Personal Trainer with the American Council on Exercise (ACE) and Nutritionist whose articles have appeared in a variety of websites and magazines.