

**Dr Mike T Nelson:** Hey, what's going on its Dr Mike T Nelson back once again with the Flex Diet Podcast all things to increase body composition and strength. Add muscle all without destroying your health and done in a flexible program/process. Today is just a solo cast with myself.

[00:00:25] And I'm going to be talking about the two forgotten methods to get stronger that are not necessarily lifting or strength related. So these would be two things you can work on. That will allow you to get stronger. So we'll get into that in just a minute. Wanted to let you know that this podcast is brought to you by myself. So today it is, you can get on the [newsletter](#).

[00:00:58] I will let the cat out of the bag that I am releasing a grip strength product. And grip strength will be one of the items I'll talk about here today. And you can get on the list for all the information on that. Go to [www.bettergripstrength.com](http://www.bettergripstrength.com). That's [www.bettergripstrength.com](http://www.bettergripstrength.com) all one word.

[00:01:22] And that will put you on to the main, the newsletter with all of the information coming out very soon. Depending upon when you're listening to this. This is being recorded on Halloween. So it will be out. Directly after that. If you're listening to it later, you can still go to the same link, [www.bettergripstrength.com](http://www.bettergripstrength.com) and you'll have all the information there. So I'll [jump right into it today. So as I mentioned at the top, These are two forgotten methods to get stronger. And if we use the analogy of a car. Then I think this works quite well.](#)

[00:02:07] So number one which I've talked about before on the podcast and many other places is the VO2 max or your aerobic capacity? Now at first blush, you might be thinking well, that doesn't make sense. I'm not necessarily using my aerobic metabolism, primarily for lifting. We can debate that later and have a long discussion over dark beer and dark coffee about the limiting factors of oxygen and its delivery.

[00:02:38] And do we really have anything that's anaerobic per se. My bias is probably not. We just have different rates of oxygen consumption and use and delivery. But what we do know is if your VO2 max is very low. So VO2, so volume of oxygen that you can run through your system. If that is very low, that is going to directly limit the amount of volume or work you can do for strength training.

[00:03:11] And even if you want to throw Metcons in there and just general. Exercise and work capacity. So aerobic metabolism is how well your body uses oxygen to create the cellular fuel, which is ATP. Denison. Try. Phosphate. And

if we go back to the car analogy, If we have a bigger car engine that is more efficient.

[00:03:39] We can create more energy. If you are trying to put a turbocharger on a little three cylinder, Yugo yeah, you might extract a little bit more performance from it, but you run the risk of blowing the engine up and there's only so much performance you can extract from it. We compare that to a V8 or a V12, or just a much bigger engine in order to start, you are going to be in a much better place.

[00:04:12] And usually where I see this limiting is in two places. One is the amount of volume that somebody can do in a single training session or over the course of a week or month or whatever period of time you're talking. If the aerobic metabolism is very low, right there, VO2 max is a low it is much harder for their body to create energy, to replace the energy that was used during exercise. The other area that is limiting is the amount of sets or work.

[00:04:48] You can do any given session especially if you're short on time. So it is true that if you're doing Olympic weightlifting or maybe even power lifting, And you want to rest 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 minutes between sets. If you have time to do that, you could make an argument that training at a very high level that might be useful.

[00:05:11] But most people don't have that much time. Unfortunately what they do is if they have a very low aerobic base, They start cutting the rest periods. And then what happens is if you look at the reps they can do per set. It starts to drop off quite fast. So let's say set one. They're doing dumbbell bench press. They get eight reps.

[00:05:35] And then the next set, they get seven. And then they're in a hurry. So they don't rest real long. That aerobic metabolism is low. And they get three or four on the last set. So they've limited the amount of work that they are able to. And if you look at hypertrophy, especially. It is debatable. What is the main factor? There's probably multiple factors and definitely many roads to get there.

[00:06:01] But one of them is the volume of work that you can do. You can only do as much work as you can recover from. So by having a better aerobic metabolism. You can do more high quality work. So that third set and you might get, six reps again, or five reps. Maybe you can add a fourth set in a reasonable amount of time.

[00:06:22] And still get five reps again. So you're adding more work that you're keeping the quality of that work much higher. And we know, especially for strength development that let's say you're targeting. 85% of 1RM. So one rep max, and you're doing reps there. If you want to get stronger, at some point you do need to work in those higher percentages of one rep max.

[00:06:49] Ah, there's some data around going above 90% of your 1RM. And when you do that's very much specific to strength development. And if you don't want to rest for five, eight minutes between sets having a better aerobic metabolism is going to allow you to work at those higher percentages. And just do more volume there at a reasonable amount of time.

[00:07:14] So while the aerobic metabolism isn't maybe necessarily directly related to strength and hypertrophy. What I've seen with working with clients now for over 16 plus years. I wish I would've looked at the status of the aerobics system much earlier than what I did. So that begs the next question. Then how do you test it now? You may not be a complete goon like me and have a Moxy sensors. You can stick over the muscle that looks at local oxygen use.

[00:07:46] You may not have a several thousand dollar metabolic cart. Which we'll look at all of the air coming in and out oxygen and carbon dioxide. Both what percentages of oxygen versus carbon dioxide and how much air flow is being moved in and We can then calculate how much your body is using and expelling. If you don't have any of that fancy stuff.

[00:08:10] The two best tests I found is test number one. As to do a 2000 meter row on a concept, two rower. I'm not sponsored by concept two or anything, but the data and the algorithm is specific to the concept two rower independence. I have used it on. Other rowers, just to get a rough idea of where somebody

[00:08:32] But technically the algorithm and the data was designed for the concept two rower. So you would get on, you would warm up and you would set to your distance for exactly 2000 meters. And then you row as hard as you can over the entire 2000 meters. And your goal is to get the lowest time you possibly can.

[00:08:54] No, of course there is pacing issues and you haven't done it before. And there's some learning effect and other things there. If you really want to go balls out into it, you could give yourself a rest day, then maybe go at it again. But it's a pretty damn miserable tests to do. It's definitely not a lot of fun.

[00:09:12] I've had clients over for a weekend retreat my place when they're back home in Minnesota. And we've put the old Moxies on them and put metabolic card on them and had them do 2000 meters for fun. And nobody really enjoyed it at all, but you can then go to the concept to site, go to the old Google and

[00:09:33] Concept two VO2 max. And it should pop up on the first page. If not the first one, there. You'll enter in some of the metrics and it'll spit back at you. What your VO1 max is. The nice part about that is VO2 max has been very well studied and we've got very good population data. So you can then compare yourself just to a standard population.

[00:10:00] And we'll come back to that point. The other way you can do it. If you're into running is what's called a 12 minute Cooper run test. You're going to use some type of GPS to find a place that's relatively flat. Yes in a pinch, you can do it on a treadmill, but I'm not a huge fan of running on treadmills per se, but you can do it.

[00:10:20] You're going to warm up and then you're going to see how far you can run. In exactly 12 minutes. Again, you can type that in to the old Google. 12 minute Cooper run, test a VO2 max max, and there'll be a site that can do the equation for you. And again, that'll tell you what your VO2 max is, and you can compare that to a population data.

[00:10:45] Now most of the time when they compare to population data, it is standardized per kg. So it is standardized per weight. So there you go. There are two ways you can test your VO2 max, you can do a two K on a concept, two rower. That is my preferred method. If you are not a runner, if you are a runner, then the more specific test is a 12 minute Cooper run test.

[00:11:11] Now in general, I would say you want to be at least 50% of the population. For most of the clients I work with definitely being above average and towards the high-end 80 percentile of the population is going to be better. But if you are below 50 percentile of the population, then you absolutely need to work on aerobic capacity.

[00:11:35] Even if it's just for performance, obviously for longevity, there's some huge benefits to having a higher VO2 max. There's lots of great data on that.

[00:11:47] And the question then is how would I train it? So I'd say if you're below 50% of the population, which again, this is just a rough cutoff. You can

do what's classically called zone two cardio work. So the zones are just different heart rate zones to work in. I would go for 10 to 40 minutes, two to five times per week.

[00:12:09] And then I would do nasal breathing. So breathe in and out of your nose. Now for most people, that's going to be a right limiter to start. You can find other podcasts where I've talked about nasal breathing here. If you know your zone two, and you've used a heart rate strap for the Cooper run test.

[00:12:26] Then you'll have a good idea of where you're at on In terms of modality. If you're running, you can probably do your own to work running. What I have found though, is if you're not a runner, most of the time, it's going to be hard to get to that low intensity Even with a rower, I found it sometimes hard to get to that lower intensity of work. Again, it depends upon the individual.

[00:12:50] My bias is if you can use a bike that works really well. You don't have to worry about impact from A cheap way you can do is I have. My old mountain bike that I put road tires on that have had since literally high school. And I put a fluid trainer on the back. So I'm one of those stationary trainers, so I can ride in one place and I didn't have to spend a lot of money on a fancy bike.

[00:13:14] If you have a fancier bike or other things, that's great, but that's a real cheap alternative you can do. The nice part about that is if the weather isn't very good or it's snowy in Minnesota and cold. I can just do it in my garage. So it eliminates any excuses. I would have to not get it done.

[00:13:30] And as I said, you're going to look at 10 to 40 minutes per session. There's some data to show maybe even 60 minutes, but I find that's just a little mentally daunting for most people, two to five times per week, nasal breathing in and out. Another good one is for intensity is called the talk test.

[00:13:48] There's some pretty good data to support that for zone two work. This would be, if you were talking to a friend, you could still talk to them while you're doing your cardio. They could tell you're exercising. But you could get mostly complete sentences out. If you get to the point where you can't get complete sentences out and you have to take really deep breaths and pauses.

[00:14:09] While you're talking, your intensity is probably a little bit too high. So again, I would not get super wrapped up in the intensity per se. I don't think you need to be hyper-specific about it, but some lower intensity old school,

basic building or aerobic stuff is going to be great. And the reason for the lower times is mostly just getting used to the habit.

[00:14:34] With some clients I programmed literally starting at one minute per Right. And you're probably not going to get a huge physiologic benefit from one minute. You can easily start scaling up from there and you're just starting with the habit of doing it. Now if you're above say 50% of the general population.

[00:14:53] You can probably get by with a little bit more higher intensity work. Again, this is all subject to, what are your goals? What are you trying to do? So it's very hard to give specifics for but what I like doing is take about five or six days per week. I'll typically do this in the morning. And I'll do a bout six minutes on the rower. You can do it on a bike, but I find on a bike, you have to go a little bit more higher intensity.

[00:15:21] And I literally just go for six minutes of moderate intensity. This is going to be a little bit higher heart rate. During that time, typically my average heart rate will be 141-145. And max heart rate. The last time I hit it was the 180-187. So in terms of percentages there. Again, I'm not super worried about the percentages. Typically I'll spec it as an RPE of an eight. So RPE is rating of perceived exertion.

[00:15:49] And an eight is relatively hard, but not super hard. And the way you can check this is that each day you do So let's say you're doing Monday through Saturday. First thing in the morning, you're going to do six minutes on a rower. You should be able to come back and get relatively close to your same performance the next day. If you feel like it's taking a huge heroic amount of effort to get that done.

[00:16:15] Either your nutrition and sleep and recovery is a floating trash bin fire, or you just went a little bit too hard on the intensity. So I would recommend you back off on the intensity. Don't go quite as hard. You can do nasal breathing for this. If you want, if you're more experienced with that.

[00:16:33] Or you can do nasal in and mouth out for breathing on that. What I found is it just six minutes per day, five or six days per week? Most people can see a pretty decent uptick in their VO2 max. Again, you're not going to get the same benefit as a dedicated program per But you will see some benefits and in most people that's also more than enough to prevent their VO2 max from going down.

[00:16:56] Some people can even get by with less. So for myself, if I'm only trying to just hold on to my VO2 max. And I'll go three days per week at only six minutes. And that seems to work. Okay. Again, you will see some slight erosion. If you do a 2K row you would definitely, probably not be quite prepared for the higher intensity work, but that's going to be light years above not doing anything.

[00:17:22] So number tip number one, VO2, max, this is going to be the, about the size of your aerobic engine. You can test it doing a two K on a concept, two rower or a 12 minute Cooper run test. And then you can train at doing some old school aerobic base, building a zone to work. Or you can go a little bit, a higher intensity with that. With a shorter duration.

[00:17:48] Again, as I said, I typically like to do those first thing in the morning. A template I've used just tons and tons over and over Monday, Wednesday, Friday. I lift something Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, do some type of cardio Sunday, take a day off and do your food prep. So if you want more information on the nutrition and recovery side,

[00:18:10] Check out the flex diet certification, go to [flexdiet.com](https://flexdiet.com) for all the information there. If you're interested in pH changes and how to train for low to moderate intensity zone to work. And how to do like true high intensity interval training. Which does have its place and is a very beneficial when used correctly.

[00:18:32] Maybe you want to get fancy and add some heat or some cold water immersion to this check out the physiologic flexibility certification, where I go into all the details on that. You can find that [physiologicflexibility.com](https://physiologicflexibility.com).

[00:18:48] So number two is going to be grip strength as I alluded to. You might be asking, why do I want to do grip strength? I'm already holding on to stuff when I lift. The grips strength is like the tires on your car. So if you're trying to get high performance out of super worn out bolognaise skins for tires.

[00:19:08] It's not going to go real well. So even a moderate improvement in grip, strength of the tires on your And you're going to see a pretty big improvement in overall strength. And if you really want to test this play with a two inch axle for a deadlift. A lot of time and axle bar is usually around at least two inches. Sometimes they're a little bit bigger do this with a double overhead grip. So both palms will be facing down.

[00:19:35] No straps. A lot of times the actual dedicated axle bars are usually smooth. There's no knurling or anything on it. And what you'll find very

quickly. Is that your ability to deadlift can be limited by your grip very fast, especially in that type of setup where your grip is going to be a limiter for probably 99.9% of the population.

[00:20:00] So when I trained a lot more people in person at my place especially younger. Guys who wanted to deadlift all the time and it turned into kind of a pooping dog. They would be banned from using a normal bar. And a mix of grip and we did a ton of work with just double overhand on the axle. And what you find out is that if you can't hold onto it, it's a very weird thing where your hips won't come up early. Like you literally can't move. So you.

[00:20:31] Can't get into a bad position. Again, there's a few freaks and weirdos out there who their grip strength may not be limiter but for mere mortals, you're just not going to be able to do, to move the weight. So it was a self-correcting factor. And I'm sure you've had the same experience where you started your deadlifts and let's say your max is 405. You just start with 135 and you hold onto the bar and everything just feels really good. And you've all had the experience where when your grip is more secure,

[00:21:02] You can always lift more or lift faster.

[00:21:07] So my basic tasks for grip, and there's a whole bunch of different, specific grip tests you can do. I liked having people do just the single are, I shouldn't say a double overhand deadlift. With a one inch just standard Olympic bar. So not necessarily even an axle per se. Just your standard Olympic bar, you would find, do a double overhand grip and see what your max is with that grip. Even with that, most people are still going to be limited by their grip.

[00:21:37] So in my case many years ago, when I tested this. And max dead lift at the time. And the straight bar was around 405, which I had done in a meet. And I did a double overhand. Literally maxed out at 235. So that's a massive difference. Between my double overhand and my mixed so I worked on it for quite a while to help them.

[00:21:59] My buddy adam Glass. And now in general, on a good day. No double overhand. Like 365. I think my PR has maybe 375, 380, somewhere in there. I haven't tested my one, RM a straight bar, dead lift in quite a while, but. Everything feels a lot better. And what I found with, especially with clients is if you have a huge discrepancy between what you're using with straps or what you're using with a mixed grip,

[00:22:27] Working on your grip, strength will transfer to a mixed grip deadlift also. Which is crazy. So a real quick test your max double overhand deadlift, and then compare that to your maxed with either straps or a mixed grip. Again, I don't have any really cutesy. Oh, if you're this much difference or if it's, 75.7, seven, 8%, I don't think you can be that quite specific.

[00:22:56] But you'll know if there's a big gap between those working on your grip is going to have a huge payoff. The other way to know too is if you use straps on everything, I can guarantee that your grip is probably Yeah, it doesn't mean that straps are bad. There's a time and a place to use them, but if you've been using them on everything,

[00:23:15] For quite some time. I can guarantee you that your grip is probably not as strong as it could be. The other nice part too, is that when your grip is stronger, everything else is easier and it feels better. How would you train it? Again, there's a whole bunch of ways you can do this, but some really big payoff ones are going to be a double overhand grip on your deadlifts, or even on your max days, you can do your warm-up sets with double overhand to get some more work in.

[00:23:44] I actually would add another day of doing double overhand with fat grips. So fat grips are a great way to increase the diameter of the bar. For 30 bucks through Amazon. For most guys using the Baloo fat grips are going to be good. Most women just because they have slightly smaller hands, the black, the 1.75 fat grips are going to be better.

[00:24:08] The blue spec is about two inches, right on when you put them on the bar, it's going to be a little bit over that. And then do your dead list. Double overhand. So this way, your grip is getting more work. And what I find for most people, if they're really working on grip, they can add this almost as another deadlift day.

[00:24:27] Because it's more taxing on the grip. They're doing sub max weights and in general, it doesn't beat people up too bad.

[00:24:35] Another thing that you'd want to add that has a very high payoff as what's called a pinch work. If you imagine you've got your hands and thumb now straight. A simple way to do this. This start with a two or three. The metal 10 pound plates, and then put your thumb on one side and your fingers on the other side. And then just see if you can do what's called a pinch deadlift with one hand.

[00:24:59] And if you want to scale up and can do that with the 2 25 pounds. And you can then play with a 2 35 pound plates and then if you really want to get crazy. If you can do it with two of the 45 pound plates. What you'll find is that this is a great way to work the thumb. The thumb is going to be an opposition to the other four fingers.

[00:25:19] A lot of times I see on people that the thumb is actually a very weak. You sometimes see this on even overhead lifts like a military press. If the wrists are always bent back and a horrible looking position. Same thing with bench press. And you can't seem to cue yourself or your clients out of it.

[00:25:39] Most of the time. What I've seen is the wrist is a little bit weak and the thumb is very weak. So what their brain is doing is it's moving it. The load farther away from the thumb or the weak spot. But unfortunately that adds. A huge amount of stress to your wrists and you'll get cranky risks. A very quick with doing

[00:26:00] Especially, if you have a smaller bone structure, like I do. So grip strength is like is the tires on your car. Greater grip strength is going to transfer to just being stronger on almost everything. A quick test to do is double overhand, deadlift for 1RM max. And then compare that to with straps or a mixed grip.

[00:26:23] If you have a huge difference there working on double overhand, I left. It's going to be good. Pick up some fat grips for 30 bucks. If you have access to an axle bar, then that's great. Most people probably won't. If you've been using straps all the time, step one is just to get rid of your straps for about six to 12 weeks.

[00:26:45] Your lifts will go down during that period of time. But so far everyone I've had do that when they transfer back. To their main loads or even using straps and just their last few sets. Overall their strength definitely comes up and surpasses where they were at before. So I do just straps on occasion, but I try to limit them to just some of the later sets.

[00:27:08] Early sets for a vast majority of things I don't, or as I mentioned before, you can have a day where you're going to work up to a heavy deadlift. You're going to use a mixed grip or you're going to use straps on purpose. And then you may add another day where you're just doing rep work. With a double overhand grip and you can even add fat grips to that, to tax the grip even more.

[00:27:33] And if you want more information on a grip, I'm working on getting Adam Glass on the podcast, hopefully for next or just trying to work out some scheduling stuff here. I've learned a ton from Adam over the past. And 12 plus years when he was up in Minnesota, I got to go train with them on a fairly regular basis.

[00:27:53] And he's been a huge help. To me with increasing my grip strength, which was. Before I started, even after I had been training for awhile. My grip strength was not necessarily good was actually pretty freaking horrible. Now it's getting to be a pretty decent comparatively speaking.

[00:28:09] But it is something that I do work a fair amount on some of my main goals, like lifting the. 170 pound Thomas cinch dumbbell are actually very grip specific. So if you want more information on how to train a grip, Which doesn't mean you have to be a grip competitor. You don't have to spend, hours per week doing this.

[00:28:29] When I found as a few key exercises just added into your normal training. Has a huge payoff. For literally, probably the last decade. I don't think I've ever worked with a client that I didn't have them do some grip stuff. And again, a lot of them, they may not even notice that because it's baked into their program.

[00:28:48] Whether it's not using straps, specking, a double overhand, a deadlift. Or even some hanging things like pull ups and chin ups. Play curls, reverse plate curls. I pretty much always have some grip work in their program. Because I know that the transfer to it through the rest of their lifts. And just overall health is huge.

[00:29:10] Last component is a grip is also highly associated with longevity. So just like aerobic metabolism is associated with longevity gains. Grip strength is a highly correlated with longevity. Now this may be a one-way street. Meaning, and those studies, they just measure grip strength, and they looked at mortality. So how long people were going to live. So it may turn out that's just a rough proxy for overall strength.

[00:29:37] But my biases, I think it's a two way street, meaning the stronger grip you have. I do think that'll probably transfer to some longevity. Gains. And if you think about what you need, when you function later in life, Being able to hold on to things, get into pickle, jars, open stuff, right? It's you don't want that to be a limiter. You also don't want your aerobic metabolism, your body's ability to create energy, especially when you're outside of the gym.

[00:30:05] To be the limiter. And then the third big one, there is going to be lower body strength or muscle size. Hypertrophy muscle mass. Those are correlated with each other. So if you want more information on the upcoming grip product just sign up to the link there, which is at [bettergrip.com](https://bettergrip.com).

[00:30:25] Or if you're already on my newsletter, then you're already included. You'll have all the information sent to you and we're working on that very soon. Super excited to be doing that. With Adam, as I said, not only is Adam a really great. And instructor and coach he's done some just absolutely bananas stuff in terms of grip strength.

[00:30:45] We got to visit and hang out with him. The last time we went through Weatherford, Texas. It was about a week and a half ago now. And he was working on doing. Pull-ups to a pinch grip. So as we mentioned. Thumbs straight fingers straight. Risks and a little bit of flexion. And I think when I was there, he did 12 in

[00:31:04] Which even for me, just to try to hang from the bar in a pinch position, I couldn't even hang there for a second. Pretty crazy stuff, excited for that product. It's going to be super cool. And like I said, you don't have to be a dedicated grip competitor to get some huge benefit. Out of just a few key exercises per week, go to [bettergripstrength.com](https://bettergripstrength.com).

[00:31:25] Thank you so much for listening to this podcast. Always greatly appreciate it. If you have time and can just leave us a very short review, even a couple of sentences is huge. If you have other friends that would be interested in this, please pass it along to them. Again, thank you so much for listening greatly. Appreciate it. And I will talk to you all next week.

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