

At the moment in strength training a lot of training is being devoted to grip training and the devices that enhance the grip. Is this another fad or is it a valuable addition to the training program to increase health and performance? The evidence all seems to point to the latter.

The barbell and dumbbells, in the vast majority of gyms today, have a diameter of about 1". In the real world nothing is usually that easy to grip when performing a physical activity. This is even truer on the rugby field.

When starting off with a training program, grip is of little importance if you can not perform a single chin-up or can barely manage to deadlift your mobile without the battery. If this is the case by simply training, your grip strength will go up.

Once you have reached a basic level of strength, the easiest way to increase your grip strength is to incorporate thick handle (2" thick is a very good diameter to start with) training into all your upper body routines. If you haven't got access to a gym with a full range of thick handle dumbbells than there are implements available that you can put in your gym bag that will wrap around any bar or dumbbell that will have the same positive effects.

A huge mistake I see from people is that they use wraps or straps when doing any upper body pulling or rowing. Not only is this a mistake for anyone who needs strength for rugby but it will retard your upper body development because your grip will always be a limiting factor.

Another factor to consider with grip is that grip strength is very specific to the object being handled. This means that if you only train with a 2" thick dumbbell than you will only get strong with a 2" thick dumbbell. To train the grip in a variety of positions and angles you can buy a loading pin (this is used to load plates) and buy an assortment of grip tools. Some of the more popular implements are the pinch grip (this is available in credit card width or phone book size), the Rolling Thunder (this is a 3" thick grip that spins so you can't cheat) or even baseball attachments.

The way you incorporate these tools into your routine is to perform them at the end of a workout. They work very well at the end of an arm or a chest & back day. To get the best results, perform 1 to 3 repetitions with an 8 second hold at the top of the movement.

Get A Grip

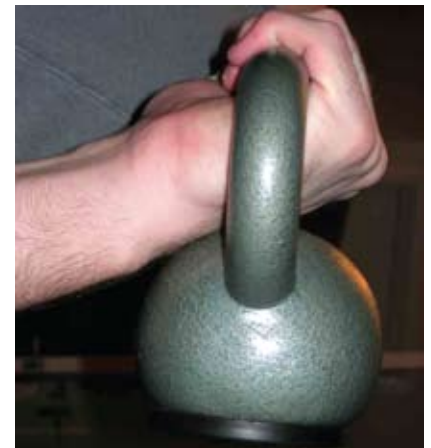


Above: The Pinch Grip

Above Right: The KettleBell with eagle loop

Right: Kettlebell

As the grip is so specific, an easy way to make your workouts suited for rugby is to use a towel or even a rugby jersey for one hand while performing chin-ups (the other hand is holding onto the chin-up bars unless you're part gorilla). You must be competent at doing full range chin-ups before you consider trying this advanced option.



An example program to work the Chest & Back while incorporating grip would look something like this:

	Exercise	Reps	Sets	Tempo	Rest
A1	45 Incline 3" Barbell Bench Press Mid Grip	2-4	6	32X0	120
A2	Towel Chin-Ups	2-4	6	3010	120
B1	Supine 2" DB Bench Neutral Grip	4-6	4	4010	90
B2	Low Pulley 1-Arm Bent-Over Row 2 1/2" D-Handle	4-6	4	3011	90
C1	Pinch Grip (Credit Card Thick)	1-3	3	1018	30
C2	Eagle Loops	1-3	3	1018	30