

The Best Exercise for Bigger Arms



Chinups are the best exercise to build bigger arms. Hang on the pullup bar with straight arms and your palms facing you. Pull yourself up until your chin passes the bar. Chinups work your back but also your arms. They work your arms more than Pullups with palms facing away because this take your biceps out. That's why Chinups are easier.

Chinups beat Barbell Curls for bigger arms. The stronger you are, the more muscular you'll be. The guy who can Barbell Curl 60kg/135lb almost always has bigger arms than the guy struggling with 20kg/45lb. Hence the pictures of Arnold curling 60kg/135lb. He lifted heavy because he knew more strength is more muscle.

The problem: curling 60kg is too heavy for most people. Watch how they'll cheat by leaning back. This makes the weight easier to curl by bringing it closer to the center of mass. But it takes work away from your biceps. And it compresses your lumbar discs from the back which can result in lower back pain, or worse, injuries like herniated discs.

That's why some people curl with their back against the wall. This stops cheating but doesn't increase the weight you can curl. It lowers it. Pumping your arms with light curls doesn't work unless you've built arm muscles first. But you must lift heavy for this. Hard to curl heavy without cheating. Hard to get stronger at curls because it's an isolation exercise.

Chinups solve these issues. One, cheating is harder. Granted some cheat using momentum ("kipping"). Others do half reps - not going all the way down or not pulling their chin over the bar. But if you use a full range of motion, your biceps and back will do all the work. And you won't get any lower back pain unlike with curls.

Two, the weight on Chinups is heavier. Curling 40kg/95lb is challenging for most people, hence the cheating. Few will ever curl 60kg/135lb. But chinups force you to lift your body-weight. I weigh 75kg and can do 10 chinups easy. This exposes my biceps to 75kg weight. More weight than I've ever curled. And more weight is more muscle.

The difference is even bigger if you do weighted Chinups. I can do Chinups with 20kg attached to my waist. That's 95kg my arms have to lift. I could never curl 95kg, that's just too heavy. But I can do Chinups with 20kg (95kg total load) for sets of five easy. The heavier you lift, the stronger you get, the more muscular you'll be.

Three, getting stronger at Chinups is easier. Curls are an isolation exercise that only work your arms. Chinups are a compound exercise that work your arms but also your back. More muscles working means more weight you can lift. It also means you can progress and get stronger more easily on Chinups than curls.

StrongLifts 5x5 already works your arms. Pressing the bar on the Bench and Overhead Press works your triceps. Pulling the bar on the Barbell Row works your biceps. Gripping the bar hard on Deadlifts and Squats works your arms. But if you want extra arm work, add Chinups at the end of StrongLifts 5x5 workout B (after Deadlifts).

Three sets of 10 reps. If you can't do 10 reps, do as many Chinups as you can with good form. Aim for one extra rep next workout. If you can't do a single Chinups, do negatives. Pull yourself over the bar any way you can, then lower yourself slowly (this will cause sore arms!). Or attach a resistance band to your leg and the bar to help you on the way up.

Switch to weighted Chinups once you can do more than 25 body-weight Chin-ups with good form. For example: if you did 10 Chinups on your first set, eight on your second and seven on the last set, you can switch to weighted Chinups. Attach 1.25kg/2.5lb to your waist using a belt and chain. Do three sets of five and add weight each workout.

If you're using my StrongLifts 5x5 apps for iPhone or Android, and want extra arm work, I recommend you unlock the arm work feature. The app will add Chinups to workout B. It will start with body-weight Chinups and tell you how many reps to do each workout. Once you're strong enough for Weighted Chinups, the app will tell you to switch.

That means the app will do all the thinking for you so you can focus on lifting, getting stronger and building bigger arms. Download the app for free first, then unlock the arm work feature. Here's the link to the app

- [StrongLifts 5x5 for iPhone](#)
- [StrongLifts 5x5 for Android](#)