

ED.— ALWAYS CONSULT A PHYSICIAN FIRST BEFORE BEGINNING ANY EXERCISE OR FITNESS PROGRAM.

Get a load of the triceps on this guy! It's the King Neptune statue by sculptor Paul DiPasquale, Neptune Park, Virginia Beach Boardwalk, U.S. State of Virginia

# Neptune's Triceps

Text and photos courtesy of Gretchen M. Ashton, CFT, SFT, SFN, NBFEE. Founder of ScubaFit®

**Neptune, King of the Deep, is ripped! This Ancient Roman god of the sea has superhuman strength and endurance to invoke earthquakes, tidal waves, floods and storms. He is often depicted with massive arms brandishing a three-pronged spear called a trident. Neptune's ability to wield his weapon is made possible (in part) by the triceps brachii, the large muscle on the back of the upper arm. Like the trident, the triceps is comprised of three parts.**

The long, lateral and medial heads of the triceps brachii perform extension of the elbow joint. The second role of the triceps is to act as a powerful antagonist, stabilizing and resisting the biceps brachii

and brachialis in flexing the elbow. Third, the triceps plays a minor role in moving the shoulder joint.

A prominent feature of the triceps is the horseshoe-shaped pattern of the muscle as it wraps around the pronounced common tendon. The muscle is well suited to intense training from almost every angle or position of the body. Changing the position of the shoulder joint and intensity slightly emphasizes different areas of the triceps, but the entire muscle utilizes all three heads during all movement. Rotation of the arm itself has little effect when training the triceps. The anconeus, a small muscle on the back of the lower arm located just below the elbow joint, assists the triceps. The triceps makes up two thirds of the upper arm, but because of its location, its size is often incorrectly attributed to the biceps.

*All divers rely heavily on the triceps for overall upper body strength, all pressing movements with the upper body, and swimming. Specific examples of triceps involvement include donning and doffing gear, clearing a mask, reaching for valves, rescue activities and changing direction particularly on the surface.*

## Triceps and scuba diving

As divers age, this area of the arm may lose muscle tone and strength even with continued resistance training. Women, in particular,

covet a sleek toned upper arm. More importantly, women divers benefit greatly with increased upper body strength developed when training the triceps.

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## The workout

There are more than 150 exercises for the triceps using free weights. Hundreds more variations of elbow extension may be performed with cables, machines and body





Triceps Dumbbell Extension extended position (below) and flexed position (bottom)



Triceps fail suddenly. Be on guard not to drop the weight on the face or head. With single arm exercises use the opposite arm for assistance and protection.

### Triceps Dumbbell Extension

Lie on a flat bench or wall. Contract the abdominals, tuck the shoulder blades down and toward the center of the back and make sure the head is well supported. Extend one arm above the shoulder holding a dumbbell perpendicular to the arm as shown. Inhale and bend the elbow joint to approximately a 90 degree angle lowering the weight to alongside the head. The triceps resist, stabilize and help control the speed and direction of the weight during flexion. Exhale while engaging the triceps to extend the elbow joint

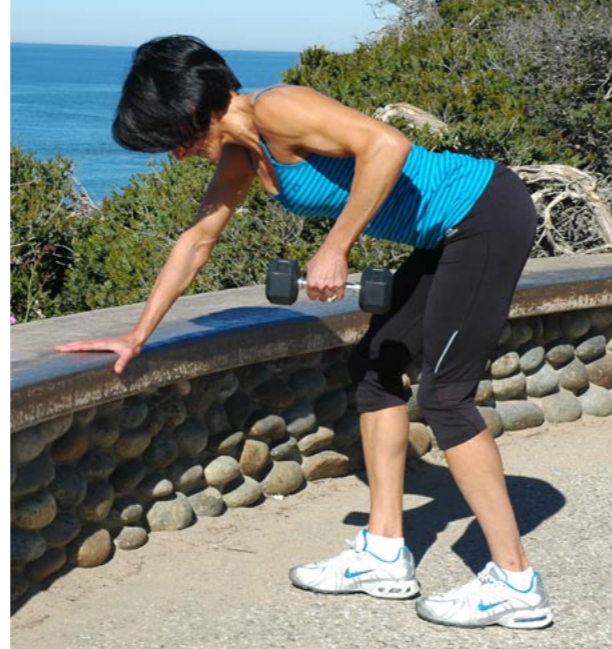
and lift the weight to the starting position. Repeat the exercise with the other arm.

**Form and Precautions:** When feet are on the bench, bend the knees to support the lower back. Otherwise, make sure feet are firmly planted on the floor with a natural arch in the lower back. Keep the wrist straight as part of the lever arm (forearm).

**Variations:** The weight may be lowered to the same side or varied diagonally across the body toward the opposite shoulder. Decide on one direction and maintain it through completion of all repetitions.

### Triceps Dumbbell Kickback

Stand in a split stance, bent-over posi-



Triceps Dumbbell Kickback flexed position (left) extended position (below)



tion supported by one arm on a bench or wall as shown. A flat back is essential with the shoulder blades pulled down and toward the center of the back. Contract the abdominals and align the opposite arm alongside the body with the elbow bent and near the side of the waist. Inhale to begin. Exhale while engaging the triceps to extend the elbow joint and straighten the arm. Press back firmly and feel the triceps contracting. Inhale while bending the elbow to the starting position and repeat.

**Form and Precautions:** More support may be added for the lower back by kneeling on a bench with one knee. This exercise may also be performed sitting down and leaning forward with a pillow or rolled towel under the torso for added support.

### Triceps Dip

Begin by sitting on a bench or wall. Place the arms and hands alongside the body as shown. Slide the body off the bench by walking the feet out a few inches. Make sure to keep the knees slightly bent. Inhale while lowering the body by flexing the elbow joints to approximately a right angle of the elbows. The triceps will resist, control and stabilize this movement. Keep the torso close to the bench and avoid flaring the elbows away from the center of the body. With the hands pressed firmly against the surface of the bench, exhale while engaging the

work and possible strain and injury.

**Variations:** Beginners may place an aerobic step, block of wood, stack of books, or Bosu under the body as a safety stop. To add challenge to the exercise, the feet may be placed a variety of higher positions using a second platform or bench. Additional resistance may be added by resting weights on top of the thighs. ■

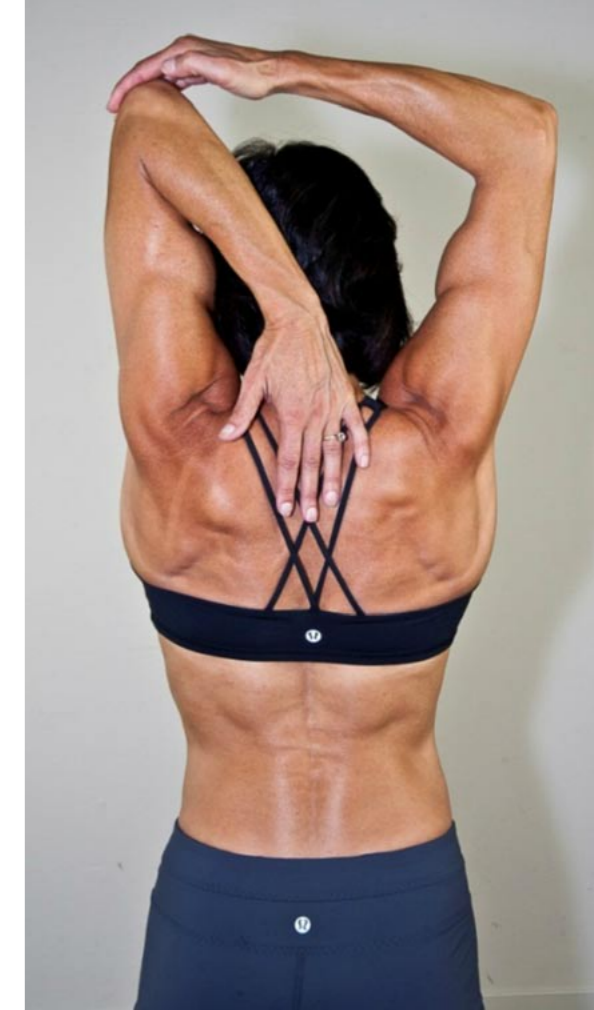
*Gretchen M. Ashton is registered with the National Board of Fitness Examiners. An advanced diver, International Sports*



triceps to extend the elbow joint and return to the straight arm position. This exercise works the pectoral muscles of the chest and the front of the shoulder along with the triceps.

**Form and Precautions:** Lowering the body far below a right angle of the elbow joint may result in excessive shoulder

Do the Easy Triceps Stretch at the end of the workout to relieve fatigued muscles



*Sciences Association Elite Trainer, and world champion athlete, Ashton developed the ScubaFit® program and the comprehensive FitDiver® program, which includes the first mobile app for scuba diver fitness. Ashton is the co-author of the PADI ScubaFit Diver Distinctive Specialty course. For more information, visit: [Scubafit.com](http://Scubafit.com)*

Triceps Dip extended position (left) and flexed position (above)