



HAND WEIGHTS IN BODYPUMP

Instructors from all over have struggled with the issue of hand weights in their BODYPUMP™ classes. It is the position of Les Mills that clubs should utilize only the official BODYPUMP™ weights for each release including the “plate” portion of triceps, shoulders, and/or lunges. Les Mills Midwest would like to address this issue for the benefit of all instructors and participants. As a rule, however, it is imperative that BODYPUMP™ is conducted exactly as choreographed. This is a barbell to music class, not sculpting. The differences may seem nuanced, but the bar is crucial to the integrity of the program. It is important that instructors explain diligently the acceptable equipment for this format. Understand that liability support from Les Mills International is contingent upon strict compliance with choreography, instruction, and equipment by both instructor and facility in the delivery of BODYPUMP™.

Warm-up [#1], squats [#2], back/glutes/hamstrings [#4], biceps [#6], abdominals [#9], and cool down [#10] tracks do not present a dilemma. There is absolutely no reason to utilize hand weights for these tracks. Please do not permit participants to water down their workout by eliminating/substituting use of the bar in these tracks. They will not receive the full benefit of the exercises. When adaptations must be made due to pregnancy or injury, a very light bar, an empty bar, or no bar at all is the appropriate option.

Only a very few previous releases of BODYPUMP™ have incorporated bench fly exercises in which plates are used during the chest track [#3]. Most participants can use the USA standard BODYPUMP™ plates for this exercise by placing their thumb through the center hole and gripping the plate. This position also improves hand strength. For those who cannot safely hold the plates it may be appropriate, but not at all recommended, to allow hand weights for the fly exercise ONLY. Chest press should always be performed with the bar and appropriate weight. Hand weights simply cannot effectively replicate the intensity of the chest press for this track. It is the job of the instructor to require participant compliance with equipment allowances. Please be sure to reiterate the importance of the bar work for the chest. The greatest challenge to allowing exceptions for hand held weights is keeping them relegated to a few options.

Track #5, triceps, presents the first legitimate argument for hand weights in class. Again, if your center is using the USA standard BODYPUMP™ equipment, most participants can slip their thumb through the hole and grip a small or medium plate for kick backs. Holding both sides of a medium or large plate can be easily achieved for overhead presses. In the rare instance in which a participant's hand cannot safely hold the plate, you may choose to permit hand held dumbbells for kick backs ONLY. Furthermore, if you have seasoned participants for whom a medium plate is not challenging and a large plate is not an option, hand weights may be used at the instructor's discretion. The bar work, however, must be retained for triceps extensions and presses. Adherence to the bar work in this track is absolutely necessary and instructors must require it of participants. You may find that it is less disruptive to your class to simply use the traditional equipment for BODYPUMP™.

The lunge track [#7] is often varied and occasionally utilizes options involving both the platform and weight plates. When communicating these options, carefully explain HOW to hold a plate. The USA standard BODYPUMP™ equipment is somewhat different than that used in other parts of the world. The plate is solid and has a small hole in the center. Seasoned participants may find that a medium plate for the non-bar options does not provide sufficient challenge and large plates are impossible to hold safely. For the rapid movement options, hand weights may be permitted, but not encouraged. Do this ONLY if participants are bringing this question forward, instructors should NOT introduce the topic of hand held weights in any track. The bulk of the track should feature the bar in one of three positions: 1) bar across the meaty portion of the back; 2) feet astride the bar; 3) bar held by front foot on end for balance. Holding a plate across the chest is an option; as is holding two medium

plates, one in each hand, while performing the entire track. Hand weights here, as always, are a LAST resort.

Shoulders [#8] offer the greatest challenge to use of the USA standard equipment in BODYPUMP™. Lateral raises, overhead presses, forward raises, and other exercises are to be performed while holding small or medium weight plates. In order to fully comply with the choreography, hand held dumbbells should be avoided. However, as with previous scenarios, if sufficient challenge cannot be achieved or safety is compromised with the preferred equipment, then hand weights, if utilized, must be reserved for the bilateral movements ONLY.

These recommendations are being made with a few assumptions in mind. First, it is assumed that the equipment in question is official USA standard BODYPUMP™ equipment. If other equipment is used, then the good judgment of fitness professionals needs to be utilized. Should there be hand “slots” or “grips” in your equipment making it more similar to the New Zealand and European standards, then hand weights should be avoided completely. Les Mills Midwest does not endorse or recommend in any way the use of hand held dumbbells in BODYPUMP™. The exceptions granted herein are in response to club concerns and are limited primarily to situations that might become unsafe. Secondly, this assumes that there is sufficient equipment to serve the clientele of the fitness center in question. It is better to allow members to participate with less than ideal equipment in the SHORT TERM than to turn them away. This being said, however, equipment shortages should be remedied as soon as possible. If your club regularly has 35 participants in BODYPUMP™, then your center should purchase adequate equipment for more than 35 participants. Finally, Les Mills Midwest is assuming that instructors are delivering BODYPUMP™ in the exact format in which they were trained and using the prescribed equipment only. Instructors should never conduct class without the barbell except when expressly permitted by the choreography. Further, hand weights should not be used by the instructor for any reason or under any circumstances. Setting an example of the ideal format for the class is an important part of the instructor's responsibility.

Les Mills Midwest appreciates your continued support of BODYPUMP™ and the other programs we distribute. We know that our success is dependent upon your ability to successfully deliver a life changing experience every class. It is our intention to make that more possible by explaining options that may be implemented and those that may compromise the efficacy of the programs. While it is never appropriate to recommend the dumb bell options, these very few situations may allow you to ignore the presence of hand weights in your classes if you so choose.

Please feel free to forward further questions to your club coach or editor@mw.lesmillsusa.com. Stand strong!



877.LES.MILLS
www.lesmills.com

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO PRINT THIS ARTICLE
AND HAND IT OUT TO YOUR CLIENTS
OR POST IT AT YOUR FACILITY.**

[INSERT YOUR LOGO HERE]