

How do I slim down bulky, muscular thighs? ^[1]

Alice,

I'm a female with very muscular legs because I play softball and soccer, but I don't want that structure anymore. How can I slim down my thighs? I know it's possible because I have seen female body builders and then I've seen them a while later and they have a feminine body type. Please help.

?Anonymous

Answer

Dear Anonymous,

Many women athletes, once they end competitive play, work on reducing the size of their muscles in different parts of their bodies. As both a softball and soccer player, you are most likely performing power movements in order to train your legs. These power movements probably involve lifting very heavy loads for a few repetitions while weight training and performing explosive movements, such as pressing off of your pivot leg when sprinting.

The amount of muscle in your thighs can be reduced, but it may hamper your athletic performance if you are still active in softball and soccer. As a power athlete, you probably have a larger proportion of fast-twitch muscle fibers (Type II) than slow-twitch fibers (Type I), found predominantly in endurance athletes. Most of your muscle type will not change, as the type of muscle fibers do not predominantly change over the course of one's life. Basically, you are born with the primary type of muscle fiber that you will always have; however, a small amount may adapt to changes in your workout regimen. Resistance and endurance training enlarges Type I fibers, while inactivity causes them to atrophy. Likewise, training may alter Type II fibers, which come in two varieties: hybrid fibers (Type IIa) and glycolytic fibers (Type IIb). Weight training converts Type IIb fibers into larger Type IIa fibers. With disuse, Type IIa fibers revert back to leaner Type IIb fibers.

If you are no longer playing or simply have a strong desire to decrease the muscle size in your quadriceps and hamstrings that make up your thighs, consider cutting back on lifting heavy weights while strength training. As opposed to performing one to four sets for three to five repetitions at a very heavy weight (85 to 100 percent of your one-lift maximum, which is the most you can lift for only one repetition, after which, you cannot repeat the exercise), begin doing three sets for 15 to 20 repetitions at a low weight (approximately 50 to 70 percent of your one-lift maximum). Below are some leg exercises to include in your training:

- Squats
- Leg press
- Leg curls
- Leg extensions
- Seated and standing calf raises
- Adductor
- Abductor

Another option to lessen the size of your thigh muscles is to introduce distance running into your training regimen, as long as you do not have or are not prone to any joint pain in your legs. This activity can transform the size and structure of your legs. This is because distance runners adapt to this form of endurance training by developing leaner muscular legs (even though the muscle type will predominantly remain the same). You may consider starting with one mile and then build up to five to ten miles during a training session.

People may be genetically predisposed to have strong leg muscles in their thighs. This might not only apply to you, but also may be a reason for your athletic success. Although your legs may not look traditionally feminine, it's important to recognize their beauty in performing strong, powerful moves when scoring a goal or running to home. Since it sounds as if you're still active in softball and soccer, you might come to terms with your priority ? to stay competitive in these sports, to play at a more leisurely level, or to stop for the time being. Your choice will determine whether, how much, and for how long you can transform the muscle mass in your thighs.

The bottom line will be deciding whether it's more important to you to have strong muscles that serve you athletically, or smaller muscles and less athletic prowess (or power). If you desire both, and you cannot change what is in your genes, then you may be able to change how you view your powerful, capable body.

Alice!

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