

Why Lifting Weight Is Not Just for Men Anymore.

For the average female, most of their gym time is spent on cardiovascular exercise or in aerobic based classes. In the last ten years alone, experts have shown the benefits of weight training for women and for those over the age of fifty, but it seem to have changed the views of few. In most cases, the women still head right for their favorite piece of cardio equipment and dig into a magazine for an hour of what they believe to be the best way to burn off those extra few pounds. I have heard numerous excuses over the years as to why women do not venture into the free weight area. (e.g. "I don't want to bulk up", "That's mans land", "I am concerned about safety", "it's intimidating", etc.). No matter what your reason in delaying the start of a strength training regime, there is no denying the huge benefits of this type of exercise. In addition to making women stronger and more physically fit, I have included what has been researched and proven as the top ten benefits of lifting weights and resistance training.

1. You Will Burn More Body Fat (*even after you have stopped working out*).

Studies performed by Wayne Westcott, PhD, from the South Shore YMCA in Quincy, Massachusetts, found that the average woman who strength trains two to three times a week for two months will gain nearly two pounds of muscle and will lose 3.5 pounds of fat. As your lean muscle increases so does your resting metabolism, and you burn more calories all day long. Generally speaking, for each pound of muscle you gain, you burn 35 to 50 more calories each day. This adds up very quickly.

2. You Will Be Stronger.

Increasing your strength will let you complete everyday tasks with more ease and with a lot less chance of injury. It has been shown recently, with a regimented program, that women can increase their strength levels by 30 to 50 percent. Researchers have also said that rates of progression are comparable to those of men.

3. These New Levels of Strength Will Come Without the Bulk.

This is probably one of the most used excuses that I hear from women about why they do not weight train. Women should not worry that a strength training regime will result in bulky muscles that make them look manly. In order for a woman to bulk up to the point to where she rivals men's muscles, specific exercises must be done on a very dedicated basis. Women build up muscle differently than men, so the fear that manly-looking muscles will develop is not a valid concern. Researchers found compared to men, women have 10 to 30 times less of the hormones that cause muscle hypertrophy (or growth). You can also ask any guy in the gym, who is trying to put on more size, and I guarantee he will tell you how hard it is to "bulk up" even as a man. What you will get as a women is a more tone, healthier looking physique.

4. You Will Increase Your Bone Density.

Research has found that weight training can increase spinal bone mineral density by 13 percent in six months. This, coupled with an adequate amount of dietary calcium, can lessen the chances of osteoporosis later in life. Studies

also claim that strength training can actually restore lost bone density.

5. You Will Improve Your Athletic Performance.

If you look around the sports world today, more and more athletes are showing up to the field looking like fitness models. Besides the aesthetics however, the level of performance in today's athletes is miles above what it used to be. Besides the advancements in supplementation and nutrition, this is largely a result of athletes being trained with weights and resistance exercises. Whatever sports you play, strength training has been shown to improve overall performance as well as decrease the risk of injury.

6. You Will Reduce Your Risk Of Injury.

A recent 12-year study showed that strengthening the lower back muscles had an 80 percent success rate in eliminating or alleviating lower back pain. Other studies have indicated that weight training can ease the pain of osteoarthritis and strengthen joints. Strength training not only builds stronger muscles, but also builds stronger connective tissues and increases joint stability. This stability will help in the prevention of future injury and/or quicken rehabilitation.

7. You Will Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease.

Really any form of exercise will help lower your instances of illness and certain disease, but resistance training has been shown to prevent more that are specific to women. For example, strength training has been shown to prevent coronary diseases. According to Dr. Barry A. Franklin, of William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan, weight training can improve cardiovascular health in several ways, including lowering LDL ("bad") cholesterol, increasing HDL ("good") cholesterol and lowering blood pressure.

8. You Will Reduce Your Risk of Diabetes.

In addition, Dr. Franklin noted that weight training may improve the way the body processes sugar, which may reduce the risk of diabetes. Adult-onset diabetes is a growing problem for women and men. Research indicates that weight training can increase glucose utilization in the body by 23 percent in four months.

9. It Is Never Too Late To Benefit.

My grandmother did not start weight training until her mid-seventies because her doctor told her she had low bone density. Within a year of being on my program she had achieved healthy levels. Women in their 70s and 80s also can build up significant strength through weight training showing that strength is possible to gain no matter what the age.

10. You Will Improve Your Attitude And Fight Depression.

A woman's physical appearance often has a huge impact on how she feels about herself. A Harvard study found that 10 weeks of strength training reduced clinical depression symptoms more successfully than standard counseling

did. It is common for women who strength train to feel more confident, capable, and stronger. These are all important in building self-esteem which can combat depression. Strength training can also help yield quicker results and seeing these results helps with motivation and a positive attitude to keep working harder.

Conclusions

With so many benefits to strength training, both physical and mentally, it's a great idea for women to get involved in a program to build up strength and get healthier. Women who have never trained with weights should find a program conducive to their level of fitness and ability. Safety is always an initial concern and working with a personal trainer is a great way to start up a program. Make sure you take advantage of your three free sessions with either myself or one of the other trainers with whom you have made a connection.

Please feel free to contact me through the gym or email,

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I can also provide material from my research and others if you would like more details on studies that have been conducted.