



Weight Training: A Lifetime of Benefits

Gone are the days when weight training (strength/resistance training) was seen as an odd, testosterone-filled activity for Eastern bloc weight lifters and narcissistic bodybuilders. It seems weight training has really gained popularity as an important addition to the workout program for countless individuals.

Many people now understand that while cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise is a great way to burn fat, adding a little strength training to their workout earns extra calories every day. This means even burning extra calories while sleeping or sitting on the couch!! In fact, for every additional pound of muscle gained, the body burns around 50 extra calories every day of the week.

But is burning a few extra calories a week the only reason to weight train? The answer is a resounding NO!!

The benefits derived from weight training are diverse and numerous and I even surprised myself when I finally jotted them down on paper. Backed up with a tremendous volume of scientific literature, it appears weight training should be an integral part of everyone's workout routine. Let's review a few of the benefits:

- Weight training raises your metabolism which causes you to burn more calories 24 hours a day. Research shows that just two 15-20 minute sessions a week is enough to gain all the potential health benefits of strength training.
- Weight training can reverse the affects of sarcopenia, the age related natural loss of muscle mass, strength and function. After the age of thirty there is a loss of 3-5% of muscle mass per decade, making day to day tasks gradually harder to perform and slowing down metabolism - increasing the risk of weight gain.
- Weight training energizes you and has a positive effect on almost all of your 650-plus muscles.
- Weight training can lessen bone deterioration and build bone mass preventing osteoporosis.
- Weight training provides injury protection. It improves muscular endurance, joint stability, balance and coordination.
- Weight training will NOT develop big muscles on women...just toned muscles! This is because testosterone is a very important factor in the development of muscle shape. Since women have very low levels of this hormone their muscles develop differently, meaning a little resistance training will not lead to a bulky, masculine physique but rather a healthy, fit look.

- Weight training improves strength making the regular activities of daily living easier.
- Weight training reduces the incidence of low back injuries. Strong muscles, tendons and ligaments are much more capable of withstanding stress, and the improved flexibility gained by strength training also reduces the likelihood of pulled muscles and back pain.
- Weight training decreases resting blood pressure.
- Weight training decreases the risk of developing adult onset diabetes.
- Weight training decreases gastrointestinal transit time, reducing the risk for developing colon cancer.
- Weight training increases blood levels of HDL cholesterol (the good type).
- Weight training improves posture.
- Weight training improves immune system function.
- Weight training lowers your resting heart rate, a sign of a more efficient heart.
- Weight training elevates your mood by releasing endorphins and giving you a euphoric feeling.

With so many benefits, I'm sure you'll agree this is a great addition to a workout session. However, before jumping into a weight training program there are a few important points to remember. First, I would be remiss if I didn't advise you to consult a health care professional before beginning weight training. Certainly, most doctors will tell you to use caution and listen to the trainers, but nearly none will eliminate exercise altogether for their patients—there are simply too many benefits from the exertion. However, it is prudent to make sure there are no impediments to beginning this new training routine. Second, there are many amazing personal trainers out there. Seek out a professional to help you put together a program that's right for you. And third, a little effort will reap big benefits. Enjoy the new training approach and don't over do it. Muscles grow and adapt while resting so leaving a day or two between sessions is the best approach.

Feel healthier, look better, and enjoy the benefits that will last a lifetime.