

S NEW-LIFESTYLES STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOUSM STRENGTH TRAINING FACTS

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There has been a lot of talk in recent years about the role of strength training in not only strengthening muscles, but also in improving bone integrity, balance, agility and overall coordination and mobility.

Strength training, also called resistance training, is not to be confused with the mega-muscle building competitive sports of weight lifting, bodybuilding or power lifting. A way to improve overall physical fitness much like cardiovascular exercise, strength training is a specialized form of physical conditioning in which an individual performs a planned program of exercises with the goal of increasing the individual's ability to exert or resist force.

Strength/resistance training is for EVERY body!

Benefits for Women

Strength training is highly recommended to women in early adulthood to build bone mass in an effort to ward off future problems with osteoporosis and osteopenia—two bone conditions plaguing our female population in which porous bones become more susceptible to fractures. Especially for women of all ages, weight-bearing exercises are good for bone-strengthening and resistance exercise is the best exercise for bone-building. To maximize the benefit, it is better to have a comprehen-

sive strength training program that incorporates all major muscle groups. The amount of weight lifted does not have to be huge. It is beneficial to start out with even one pound and then slowly add weight to see increased results.

Benefits for children

With the U.S. facing a child obesity epidemic, strength training is being encouraged at an earlier age under professionally-qualified supervision and safe conditions. When combined with other components of a well-rounded fitness program like exercises to encourage endurance and flexibility, strength training is effective in improving body composition by increasing lean body mass.

When is it safe to start strength training exercises with children? It was once believed that strength training started at too early of an age could lead to bone plate disturbances. Today, it has been said that, generally, kids need to be mature enough to follow directions so that they can perform the exercises properly. If a child is participating in an organized sport like tee-ball, soccer, dance or gymnastics, they should be mature enough to participate in supervised strength training exercises like sit-ups and push-ups. For children, the focus of strength training should be on proper form and endurance—not on how much weight can be lifted. For children, one to three sets of 6 to 15 repetitions each is recommended no more than 2 or 3 days a week on non-consecutive days.

Benefits for Older Adults

A vital component of an effective weight-loss or weight-management program, strength training pro-



vides a variety of health benefits for older adults. A strength training program can increase muscular strength, motor fitness skills, and overall sports performance. Improving balance, coordination and mobility, strength training can help reduce symptoms of arthritis, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases. It can also help to decrease the risk of sport injuries by strengthening tendons, ligaments and bones.

The American College of Sports Medicine suggests strength training two or three times a week on non-consecutive days. A strength training program should stress the importance of a warm-up of 5 minutes of walking and a cool down of basic stretching exercises. Always using proper form, a complete program should cover all major muscle groups including the arms, shoulders, back, abdomen, hips and legs.

1. Is it better to use free weights or weight machines?

There is actually no definitive answer to this frequently asked question. Generally speaking, results from training with free weights vs. resistance machines are comparable. Use of free weights requires more sophisticated lifting technique. Some individuals choose to use resistance machines because they do not want to take the time to learn the proper technique required for free weights.

Free weights allow movement in all three planes, whereas resistance machines allow movement in only one plane. Weight machines do not require spotters and are designed with simple ways to change resistance settings, possibly allowing individuals to complete weight exercises in a shorter period of time. Most often, a decision between the two is based simply upon the availability of equipment.



2. As I woman, I want to tone the muscles in my arms and legs but am concerned that I might over-develop my muscles with strength training. I don't want bulging, masculine muscles.

Due to their hormonal composition, women can significantly increase their present level of muscular strength with a conventional strength training program with little fear of developing bulging or overdeveloped muscles.

3. How can I combat or prevent extreme muscle soreness a day or two after I lift weights?

Delayed-onset muscle soreness is common 12 hours or longer after a workout, especially if you aren't used to the activity. Muscle soreness is a normal response to the new exertion and is a by-product of the muscles' recovery and strengthening process. The soreness is generally at its worst within the first 2 days following the activity and subsides over the next few days.

One tip to prevent delayed soreness is to warm up thoroughly before your workout and cool down afterward with stretching. It's also important to give your muscles time to adapt to your activity. Methods to reduce the discomfort caused by delayed onset muscle soreness include applying ice, gently stretching and massaging the affected areas.

4. What is the proper way to breathe when lifting weights?

It is recommended that you exhale during the most strenuous part of the movement when you are exerting the most energy to displace the heavy load. Inhale during the less strenuous phase.

The most important thing is to take your time and breathe regularly between each repetition—do not hold your breath at any time during the exercise.

Not sure you should be lifting weights? Always consult your physician before engaging in any strength/resistance training exercises.

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