

Lift Weights - Why You Should Lift Weights if You're a Woman

Why Women Do Need a Strength Training Routine

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Over the last decade, researchers have made extremely compelling arguments for the benefits of weight training for women and those over the age of fifty¹. Still, the number of women who take this recommendation to heart is still quite low. Most women who exercise are spending most of their gym time on cardiovascular exercise. Whatever your reasons for avoiding the weights, if you are a woman, here are ten reasons why you need to take strength training seriously.

- 1. You Will Be Physically Stronger.**

Increasing your strength will make you far less dependent upon others for assistance in daily living. Chores will be easier, lifting kids, groceries and laundry will no longer push you to the max. If your maximum strength is increased, daily tasks and routine exercise will be far less likely to cause injury. Research studies conclude that even moderate weight training can increase a woman's strength by 30 to 50 percent. Research also shows that women can develop their strength at the same rate as men.

- 2. You Will Lose Body Fat².**

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. That can really add up.

- 3. You Will Gain Strength Without Bulk.**

Researchers also found that unlike men, women typically don't gain size from strength training, because compared to men, women have 10 to 30 times less of the hormones that cause muscle hypertrophy. You will, however, develop muscle tone and definition. This is a bonus.

- 4. You Decrease Your Risk Of Osteoporosis³.**

Research has found that weight training can increase spinal bone mineral

density (and enhance bone modeling) by 13 percent in six months. This, coupled with an adequate amount of dietary calcium, can be a women's best defense against osteoporosis.

5. You Will Improve Your Athletic Performance.

Over and over research concludes that strength training improves athletic ability in all but the very elite athletes (See Article⁴). Golfers can significantly increase their driving power. Cyclists are able to continue for longer periods of time with less fatigue. Skiers improve technique and reduce injury. Whatever sport 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, Back Pain and Arthritis.

Strength training not only builds stronger muscles, but also builds stronger connective tissues and increases joint stability. This acts as reinforcement for the joints and helps prevent injury. A recent 12-year study showed that strengthening the low-back muscles had an 80 percent success rate in eliminating or alleviating low-back pain. Other studies have indicated that weight training can ease the pain of osteoarthritis⁵ and strengthen joints.

7. You Will Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease.

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. When cardiovascular exercise is added, these benefits are maximized.

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.

Women in their 70s and 80s have built up significant strength through weight training and studies show that strength improvements are possible at any age. Note, however, that a strength training professional should always supervise older participants.

10. You Will Improve Your Attitude And Fight Depression.

A Harvard study found that 10 weeks of strength training reduced clinical depression symptoms more successfully than standard counseling did. Women who strength train commonly report feeling more confident and capable as a result of their program, all important factors in fighting depression.

Strength Training in General

Strength Training Introduction

Many people associate strength training only with athletes. At one time, perhaps, strength training was reserved only for athletes. Certainly the world of muscle building (apart from body building) was relatively unknown. But all that has changed in the last few generations as the health benefits of muscle strength and endurance have become known for men and women of all ages.

As a result of technological advances, societal changes, and personal choices, all of us place fewer demands on our muscular systems.

- Just 2 or 3 generations ago, wood was cut with hand saws.
- Stairs were far more common than elevators, and children walked to and from school.
- Recreational time was spent engaged in playing ball, climbing trees, running, jumping, and hide-n-seek, instead of parked in front of a video terminal playing video and computer games.
- Simultaneously, in the United States, food has become less expensive (as a percentage of average income levels), more abundant, and more widely available.

It's easy to see how this combination of events has led to increased body fat. Although technology and automation provide for more comfortable lives and more leisure time, a price is paid by our muscular systems.

Our bodies are miracles of adaptability, capable of altering themselves in response to loads placed upon them in such a way that future, similar loads will be less stressful. Likewise, they can and will adapt to having no demands placed upon them, becoming increasingly weaker and less capable.

In an earlier age when so much time was spent engaged in physically demanding activities, peoples' muscular systems were stimulated vigorously. So going out of the way to engage in strength training was generally unnecessary.

Today, however, unless you have a job that requires a great deal of physical activity, to ensure optimal health and maintain your functional capacities, you

may have to give back a little of the leisure time you've gained through technology and mechanization and purposely stress your muscular systems with a program of strength training.

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