



If you could do one thing that would help you maintain or lose weight, benefit your heart, improve your muscle strength and balance, strengthen your bones, reduce your risk of various diseases and help prevent injuries and help you to look and feel better, wouldn't you want to start today?

First let's go over some anatomy.....

Your Body structure is composed of

Bones – For support, to protect organs, hold muscles, make blood cells, and store minerals

Fat – Stores excess calories for use, Releases hormones that control your metabolism

Muscles – Move your bones, support your joints, burn calories, aid body functions and give your body its basic shape.

Unfortunately.....

As we age we tend to lose bone quality, lose muscle mass and gain body fat. Muscle loss begins slowly somewhere between the ages of 25 – 35 and then speeds up as we get older.

In fact, between the ages of 20 – 80 you will likely lose 35 – 40% of your precious muscle.

If you don't do anything to replace that lost muscle it will be replaced with fat.

When we lose muscle: We gain weight. Muscle tissue burns calories up to four times faster than fat tissue, if you don't intentionally rebuild the lean muscle mass lost to aging, you'll need to constantly decrease your calories over the years just to maintain your current weight. And your body composition will shift from muscle to fat.

When we lose muscle, we lose strength. You may have noticed that you can't handle and lift heavy loads nearly as well as you could several years ago.

Perhaps your balance isn't what it used to be either, that is influenced by muscle loss also.

Of course it isn't just aging that depletes your muscle mass..... Inactivity and Dieting also wreak havoc on this all important body component.

WHAT'S A GIRL TO DO????!!!!!!

Studies show that strength training can reverse all of this and more. Strength training AKA resistance training AKA weight lifting is not about being a "bodybuilder". It benefits people of all ages and fitness levels and may be particularly important for people who already have health issues such as arthritis or a heart condition.

The importance of Strength Training!

When you start to build your muscles you change your body composition.

You may not see a change on the bathroom scale... because a pound of fat and a pound of muscle both weigh a pound. But a pound of muscle is denser than a pound of fat, so it takes up less space, therefore YOU will take up less space. Adding muscle tissue will make you look leaner at the same body 'weight'

Eventually as you remove fat tissue and add muscle fiber you will lose pounds, because you increase your calorie burning capability. As you add lean muscle every activity will burn more calories. Adding more muscle raises your basal metabolism rate, which means consistent strength training, can help you burn more calories even while you sleep.

You want to lose weight and/or keep it off?

A safe, effective and healthy plan for weight loss will have you losing from one to two pounds of body fat each week. If you drastically reduce the number of calories you eat in an effort to lose more weight faster, your body will think that food is unavailable and go into starvation mode. During starvation mode, your body limits the amount of energy it expends on metabolism and your metabolic rate slows down making it more difficult to lose the body fat.

When you diet without proper exercise, you risk losing more of your lean body mass (muscle). Remember maintaining and/or building Lean body mass is beneficial to dieting because it takes more energy to stay alive than fat mass does. According to the American Council on Exercise, if you diet without strength training, for every one pound your weight on the scale decreases, 25 percent comes from lean tissue. (YIKES!)

How much PURE muscle can strength training help you gain in 1 month without 'supplementation'? All the research says the maximum amount of lean muscle you can gain *naturally* is about 2lb/month if you use an effective training program supported by the right diet. And keep in mind that the stronger you get, the harder it is to add more muscle to your frame. Your age, genetics, body type, training experience, and work ethic will also affect your gains. So don't worry about becoming 'bulky'.... It just won't happen.

You should monitor your body composition and percent of fat monthly. The American Council on Exercise recommends reducing your body fat by 1 percent per month.

Now to dispel some myths.

Myth: I'll get TOO muscular! I don't want to look BIG!

Fact: Hypertrophy — the ability of a muscle to grow in size and strength — takes time. It also takes the right combination of stress on the muscle, recovery, nutrition, hormones and genetics. Simply put, unless you're taking steroids, you won't see rapid changes in size, although you will notice some quick improvements in strength in the beginning. Most female weight trainers won't notice appreciable differences in bulk even after several weeks (unless they make a dedicated effort to build muscle). In general, if you're lifting weights three times a week, you can expect to see results in an average of 10 weeks, faster if you're eating a low-fat diet or have low body fat.

Myth: Lighter loads equal long, lean 'feminine' muscles.

Fact: If you can lift a weight 40 times without feeling fatigued, you're not challenging the muscle enough to develop good tone or get significantly stronger. And, by the way, doing 40 reps is going to take more time. You also run the risk of overuse injuries to your joints.

Instead, choose a weight that will cause muscle fatigue after no more than 15 repetitions. For the best results in endurance, muscle tone and strength; mix up your workout by using a variety of weights (from 50 to 90 percent of your maximum capacity) and repetitions (between 6 to 15 per set). Doing slightly higher reps with somewhat lighter loads helps build endurance; lower reps with higher loads helps build strength.

Myth: Lifting light weights will tone your body and lifting heavy weights will just bulk you up.

Fact: I'm not sure who pioneered the idea that heavy weights bulk you up, but the idea has stuck over the years and unfortunately makes many people afraid of lifting heavy weights. While there is some truth to the idea that lifting lighter weights for more reps does a better job of increasing endurance, lighter weights will not help you "tone" better than heavy weights. In fact, because heavier weights are what's needed to build the strength of your muscles (and admittedly, the size to a small degree) lifting heavier weights with fewer reps (8 to 12 on average) working until you're fatigued is much more effective at helping you reach your toning goals than lifting lighter weights. Not to mention that it's more time efficient, too!

Myth: If I lift weights, I'll ruin my speed.

Fact: Weight training, especially at a high intensity or with explosive movements, can actually help runners, cyclists and other speedsters get faster by building strong, powerful muscles that can rapidly react when called upon to accelerate. And another **Bonus:** A well-rounded weight-training plan also reduces injuries by balancing key muscle groups and reinforcing vulnerable joints.

Myth: If I quit lifting weights, the muscles I developed will turn to fat.

Fact: Muscle and fat are two distinct types of tissue, so it's physiologically impossible for one to turn into the other. Muscle will lose tone, however, if it's not used, which may result in a flabby appearance where you used to be solid. And if you quit training and don't adjust your caloric intake, some of that food you're eating will get stored on your body as fat.

Myth: Certain other forms of exercise will build long, lean muscles.

Fact: Many forms of exercise claim to lengthen the muscles or develop "lean" muscles, not bulky ones. But here's a truth that may be shocking to some: no form of exercise makes muscles "longer" because your muscles do not—and will not—respond to exercise by getting longer. It's just not how they work. Muscles are a certain length because they attach to your bones. That said, exercises such as yoga, Pilates, dance and barre style classes can help to increase your flexibility (improving your range of motion at certain joints) and your posture through core strength, which is a good thing and can give you the illusion of feeling and looking longer or taller. But muscle lengthening? Not possible. Claims like these are just trying to appeal to people who fear "bulking up", which as you now know simply won't happen.

The many Benefits of Strength training include:

- **More Muscle Mass.** Regular strength training builds active muscle mass that makes you fitter, stronger and more resistant to physical strains.
- **Maintain and perhaps even improve bone strength.** By stressing your bones, strength training increases bone density and reduces the risk of bone fractures and the risk of osteoporosis.
- **Control your weight.** You burn calories during strength training, and your body continues to burn calories after each strength training session. In addition as you gain muscle, your body gains a bigger "engine" to burn calories more efficiently. More calories are used to make and maintain muscle than fat, and in fact strength training can boost your metabolism by 15 percent allowing the body to burn more calories throughout the day, even during nighttime.
- **Reduce your risk of injury.** A well-trained body is more agile and stronger and therefore more resistant to injuries. Building muscle helps protect your joints from injury. Your flexibility, balance and coordination improve which can reduce your risk of falling by as much as 40 percent.
- **Relieve Pain.** Most physical pains today come from inactivity, longtime incorrect postures, muscular imbalances and an increase in bodyweight through fat. Active muscle mass supports the skeletal structures and can relieve the body from pain.
- **Develop better body mechanics.** Your posture will improve along with your ability to perform daily tasks, participate in sports and other leisure activities.
- **Boost your stamina.** As you get stronger, you won't fatigue as easily.
- **Manage chronic conditions.** Strength training can reduce the signs and symptoms of many chronic conditions, including arthritis, back pain, diabetes, high blood pressure and depression
- **Decreased Risk of Coronary Disease.** Strength training lowers blood pressure and increases the HDL cholesterol level.
- **Improved Body Image.** You can easily distinguish a person that is working out from a person that is not by the way they move, walk and behave. Regular training improves your body image, physical appearance, balance, flexibility and mobility.

- **More Efficient Immune System.** Regular strength training has positive effects on your immune system and on your lifestyle. Being physically active on a high level automatically shifts your own expectations towards your health, nutrition and your whole lifestyle.
- **Better Adherence to your fitness routine.** Proper weight training tones and strengthens all your muscles causing your whole system to work more effectively, allowing you to endure longer workouts with less muscle soreness and fatigue. You will see results and feel more energized and be more likely to stick to your workout schedule.
- **Sharpen your focus.** Research suggests that regular strength training helps improve attention and memory as we age.
- **Boosts your overall energy levels and improves your mood.** The psychological effects of strength training are proven. It relieves you from stress and anger, increases your confidence, self-esteem, self-worth and rises your mood. Strength training will elevate your level of endorphins (natural opiates produced by the brain), which will make you feel great. Research has shown this effect to be a great antidepressant, to help you sleep better, and to improve your overall quality of life.

Ready to get started?

You can join a gym or start training at home; you won't need a lot of equipment to get started. If you're a beginner, choose 1-2 exercises for each muscle group in the upper body and 3-4 moves for the lower body. You should perform 1 – 2 sets of 8 – 12 reps for each exercise. Begin with two sessions a week with at least one day in-between sessions to allow your muscles to recuperate.

Consider hiring a personal trainer to help you set up your program and teach you proper form, the investment will be well worth it!

Be sure to check with your doctor before you start lifting weights if you have any medical conditions, injuries or illnesses.