

TIP: Why Women Need Strength Training

Research continues to show that women of all ages who maintain a regular and moderate strength training program experience many health advantages. While some of us still fear that weight training will cause us to bulk up in unfeminine ways, many of us have thrown away these negative beliefs and are enjoying the benefits of resistance training.

Here are 10 reasons why strength training needs to be a serious part of our lives:

1. Weight Training Helps Us Lose More Fat Than We'll Gain in Muscle. Research shows that the average woman who strength trains 2-3 times a week for 8 weeks gains 1.75 lbs of lean weight or muscle and loses 3.5 lbs of fat. Unlike men, we typically don't gain size from strength training, because compared to men, we have 10-30 times less of the hormones that cause bulking up.

2. Weight Training Helps Our New Muscle Fight Obesity. As we add muscle from strength training, our resting metabolism increases, so we burn more calories all day long. For each pound of muscle we gain, we burn 35 to 50 more calories daily. So, for example, if you gain three pounds of muscle and burn 40 extra calories for each pound, you'll burn 120 more calories per day, or approximately 3,600 more calories per month. That equates to a loss of 10-12 lbs in a year.

3. Weight Training Makes Us Stronger. Studies show that a moderate weight training program increases a woman's strength by 30-50%. Extra strength makes it easier to accomplish daily activities, such as lifting children and groceries. In most cases, strength differences between men and women are attributable to differences in body size and fat mass. Pound for pound, we can develop our strength at the same rate as men.

4. Our Bones Benefit From Weight Training. By the time we leave high school, we have established all the bone mineral density we'll ever have -- unless we strength train! Research has shown that weight training can increase spinal bone mineral density by 13% in 6 months. So, strength training is a powerful tool against osteoporosis.

5. Weight Training Reduces Our Risk of Diabetes. Adult onset diabetes is a growing problem for women and men. Research shows that weight training can increase glucose utilization in our body by 23% in 4 months.

6. Weight Training Fights Heart Disease. We know that cardiovascular exercise keeps our heart healthy. But, according to recent research, strength training also improves our cholesterol profile and blood pressure. Balance and flexibility training will round out our exercise program.

7. Weight Training Combats Back Pain and Arthritis. A recent 12 year study showed that strengthening the low back muscles had an 80% success rate in eliminating or alleviating low back pain. Other studies have shown that weight training for women can ease arthritis pain and strengthen our joints.

8. Weight Training Helps Us Be Better Athletes. Researchers have found that strength training improves our athletic proficiency while also decreasing our risk of injury. Golfers, for example, can significantly increase their driving power and reduce their risk of common golf injuries, such as golfer's elbow, with a weight training program.

9. Weight Training Works No Matter How Old We Are. Studies show that strength improvements are possible at any age. In fact, the literature contains numerous cases of women in their 70s and 80s who successfully train with weights. For safety and efficiency, it's a good idea for older participants to solicit the guidance of a Certified Personal Trainer.

10. Weight Training Strengthens Our Mental Health. Women who strength train commonly report feeling more confident and capable as a result of our training program. In addition, studies have found that strength training can reduce clinical depression symptoms as much or more successfully than standard counseling.

Reference: Ideafit.com 2009