

What are the Benefits of Strength Training ?

Many people believe that the best form of exercise is aerobic (it improves the function of your heart and lungs). While there is some truth in this, it's important not to overlook resistance, or strength training. Strength training is surrounded by myths and falsehoods – for example women sometimes ask 'but won't I develop big muscles ?'- or parents might ask 'will it restrict my child's growth ?' The answer to both of these questions is an emphatic 'no', though like any other training regime a programme should be developed by a qualified exercise professional. Trying to do exercises, especially with weights, without proper training may result in injury. Here are a few of the well documented benefits of strength training for people of **all** ages:

Strength training should:

- Increase your Basal Metabolic Rate, meaning that you'll burn more energy all day, every day (Recent research suggests as much as 15%).
- Help with weight loss – initially you might not lose much weight (Muscle is heavier than fat), but you'll have a much more toned body
- Improve bone density and help prevent onset of osteoporosis – our bones lose density with age, so increasing bone density makes us less prone to breaks. It can be particularly useful for post-menopausal women. Recovery time after injury should also be reduced.
- Develop stronger bones, which will result in stronger joints, again making us more stable. This will result in improved balance, stability, and should help with flexibility: better ability to carry out everyday tasks and fewer accidents
- Increase our lean muscle mass, and consequently strength, endurance and power. This will allow us to live more active lives.
- Result in lower LDL Cholesterol and reduced blood pressure.
- Improve performance in sporting and/or leisure activities.
- Reduce the risk of adult onset diabetes due to improved insulin action, insulin sensitivity, fasting blood glucose and insulin, and glucose tolerance levels.
- Improve your posture, making muscle imbalance and back pain less likely
- Improve the function of the immune system.
- Lower the resting heart rate, making the Cardiovascular system more efficient.
- Help with lifting of symptoms of depression.

Remember, every time you move your body weight you're doing strength training, so adding to this with a well designed training programme is going to have nothing but positive effects. There's nothing wrong with aerobic fitness training, just remember there are other approaches which could be *included* in any exercise programme.

Finally, and very importantly: if you haven't exercised for a while, or have any medical conditions which might cause problems, check with your Doctor to ensure it's safe to increase your activity levels. Remember, pain is a sign that something is wrong....

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