



Weight WORK

Story | ANGELA AMBROSE

People of all ages and abilities can improve their overall health by integrating weightlifting into their workouts.

Strength training isn't just for bodybuilders or competitive athletes looking to bulk up. Building a stronger, leaner body improves your balance and flexibility, increases bone mineral density and revs up your resting metabolism, which helps cut body fat and your risk of disease.

Because strength training boosts your metabolism and muscle mass, you burn more calories up to 24 to 48 hours after your training session is over. Muscle is denser than fat, so the numbers on the scale may not drop, but your jeans or shirt size likely will, giving you more self-confidence and a more toned body.

"If you elevate your muscle mass, typically you will have lower body fat," says Yuri Feito, associate professor of exercise science at Kennesaw State University in Georgia. "By lowering the amount of fat in your body, you're more protected from chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure."

Often the toughest part of strength training is getting started. If you're a beginner, consider hiring a personal trainer or attending a group resistance training class to learn the basics. When searching for information or videos online, Feito suggests using well-known, reputable sources such as the

American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), American Council on Exercise (ACE) or National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM).

ACSM recommends doing at least two strength training sessions per week on nonconsecutive days. Start with eight to 10 exercises that target the major muscle groups and do one set of eight to 12 repetitions for each exercise, slowly increasing the number of sets and weight as you get stronger. Resistance-based exercises can be performed using free weights, kettle bells, tubing, weight machines, or even your own body weight.

"The biggest benefit of resistance training is quality of life," says Feito. "When you have stronger muscles, bones and tendons, you have better balance and you're less likely to get injured or fall and fracture a

DID YOU KNOW?

Bodyweight training is one of the hottest fitness trends in the nation. Next time you're looking for a quick, efficient resistance-based workout, do some pushups, abdominal crunches, jump squats and lunges. They require little or no equipment and can be performed anywhere.

bone." Simple daily activities like carrying your groceries, squatting down to pick up a basket of laundry or climbing stairs become much easier.

Your body will naturally start to lose lean muscle mass as you age—about 1 percent per year after age 40—unless you actively work to maintain it. A number of studies show that regular strength training, along with aerobic activity, can help prevent or reverse muscle loss, especially as you reach middle age and beyond. ♣