

# What Can Strength Training Do For You?

Besides looking better and feeling stronger, strength training has many more health benefits. Fitness expert, **Bernadette Abraham**, explains why we should incorporate strength training into our training routines

For most people wanting to get fit and lose weight, aerobic exercise is almost always the preferred form of physical activity. While activities such as running, swimming, and cycling may have the ability to burn body fat and improve fitness levels, it is important to realize however that aerobic activity alone is not the weight loss solution most people believe it to be. That statement stands correct; cardio as the only form of exercise will not bring the fat loss results most are seeking. In fact, too much cardio can actually increase the percentage of body fat. Strength training (a.k.a. resistance training) on the other hand not only reduces body fat, but also plays a major role in one's overall health and wellbeing.

## An Important Concept...

It is important to understand what happens to the body when it is put under controlled physical stress. One of the many unique qualities that the human body displays is its ability to adapt or adjust to stresses placed on it. For example, if someone repeatedly lifts heavy weights, that person will produce higher levels of maximal strength. On the other hand, if a person repeatedly lifts lighter weights for many repetitions, that person will develop higher levels of endurance. Since the body adapts to the specific type of demand placed on it, it is

important to continuously progress your workout routine in order to continuously see improvements. With that being said, if the body is not being challenged at all, the muscles will atrophy as a result.

Whether the goal is cosmetic in nature or performance-related, resistance training has been shown to produce many desirable effects such as increased cardiovascular efficiency, bone density, lean body mass, metabolism, hormone regulation, strength, power, and decreased body fat. In addition to

burning machine, it is absolutely necessary to increase muscle mass. In addition, fat loss is a two step process; first the body must be in hormonal balance to be able to unlock the fat cells and second, the fat must be transported to the muscle cells to be burned as energy. Once again, if there is a greater availability of muscle on the body, the ability to burn fat increases proportionately.

Most women are concerned about lifting weights in fear of developing muscles of Herculean

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these benefits, the body will adapt to stimulus regardless of age so it is never too late to begin a strength training program!

## Muscle = Metabolism

If fat loss is the goal, then resistance training is a big part of the solution. The reason is simply physiological; muscle is the engine that burns fat as fuel and only resistance training can build muscle. Muscle is a metabolically active tissue, therefore the more muscle a person has, the faster their metabolism will be. What is the metabolism? It is simply the rate at which the body burns through food. Therefore, it becomes clear that in order for a person to become a calorie-

proportion. Fortunately, women do not have enough testosterone to make significant increases in muscle size. In order for a woman to achieve the muscle gains seen in bodybuilding magazines, supplements and ergogenic aids are needed - so no more excuses.

## The Natural Anti-Ageing Formula

As a person approaches their thirties, noticeable changes begin to take place. They were once able to eat and drink whatever they pleased without having to worry about weight gain. Now suddenly, the same foods and beverages seem to accumulate around the hips, waist, or buttocks, and age is often to blame. Unfortunately, this

## Ways To Incorporate Resistance Training:

You can use:


- Dumbbells
- Exercise machines
- Your own bodyweight
- Resistance bands
- Medicine balls
- Kettle bells
- Home equipment like water bottles, canned goods, jugs of milk etc

is somewhat true. More than one-half pound of muscle is lost every year after the age of 25 if regular strength training is not performed, which consequently decreases the metabolic rate. The good news however is that muscle loss can be markedly delayed through regular strength training exercises and physical activity; one more reason to start a strength training program right away.

## Stronger Muscles, Stronger Bones

There is direct correlation between weight bearing exercises and bone density. In other words, gradual and progressive resistance exercises can help increase bone formation that can help lessen and prevent the likelihood of developing osteoporosis in the later years.

The exact mechanism through which resistance training increases bone density is still



unclear. However, there is a popular theory which presumes that when a muscle is stressed, an electrical charge is sent to the bone that is attached to the muscle. In turn, this electrical charge stimulates bone-building cells called Osteoblasts.

It is important to note that bone is not a lifeless object. Similar to muscle, bone is a dynamic tissue that is broken down and rebuilt throughout life. Therefore, as is the case with muscle, use it or lose it!

### Heart Healthy

According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, strength training is important for cardiac health because the risk of heart disease is reduced when the body is leaner. One study found that cardiac patients gained not only strength and flexibility but also aerobic capacity when they did strength training three times a week as part of their rehabilitation program. This and other studies have prompted the American Heart Association to recommend strength training as a way to reduce risk of heart disease and as a therapy for patients in cardiac rehabilitation programs.

Other benefits of strength training include arthritis relief, increased balance and reduction of falls in older adults, weight maintenance, a healthy state of mind, and better sleep.

In light of these facts, it seems obvious that strength training can help achieve an overall healthy lifestyle. \*

For further information, contact Bernadette at 050-283-2020 or visit [www.BernaciseMe.com](http://www.BernaciseMe.com).