

The Truth Behind Lifting Weights

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Kevin Shepard, certified personal trainer and nutritionist at DC Ranch Village Health Club, on why women should make a resolution to lift weights in 2013.



Did you know it's a myth that women develop large, bulky muscles from lifting heavy weights? The source of this myth is unknown but athletic coaches in the early 70's forbade their athletes to lift heavy weights, thinking it would bulk them up and make them slow, thus negatively affecting performance.

The myth has been perpetuated by uninformed people (including certain personal trainers) who say "lift heavy to bulk and lighter to tone." Today, however, athletic coaches have learned that both men and women who lift weights are not only stronger, but they also perform better and have fewer injuries.

The truth is that females do not bulk up when weight training. (The exceptions are female competition bodybuilders, weight-lifters and female strength and power athletes who require muscle mass and strength for performance and competition.) The benefits of lifting weights (more than five-pounders) are the reasons why women want to exercise in the first place: sculpted muscles and tight arms, thighs and buns. One cannot have firm muscles if the muscle is not worked to exhaustion, where it can then repair itself and get stronger. This happens when women challenge their muscles with heavier weights. Another great benefit of lifting weights is the efficiency of the body's changes that this form of exercise garners. When coupled with a properly balanced diet, cardio and regular lifting sessions, women can expect to see great changes in the shape of their body.

A very important benefit for women who lift weights is tackling osteoporosis before it hits. Normal aging results in osteoporosis, a condition in which you have weak and brittle bones that can break easily. You may not have heard of its first cousin, sarcopenia, a diagnosis that means you have thin and weak muscles.

The consequence of sarcopenia and osteoporosis is a disaster waiting to happen. Most women after the age 40 have some degree of both. Luckily, if you lift weights to increase muscle strength, you undo the loss of muscle. As the muscles get stronger, so do the bones, thus making bones thicker and stronger and reversing osteoporosis.

Scientific research summary shows that aerobic exercise, yoga, stretching, dance and swimming cannot influence osteoporosis and sarcopenia simultaneously like lifting weights can. Fight the aging process by getting stronger. A gallon of milk weighs a mere eight pounds and a 10- or 15-pound dumbbell won't bulk you up—lifting weights will only slow the loss of bone and muscle mass associated with normal aging.

TO LEARN MORE

Village Health Clubs and Spas www.villagelubs.com.

For more information on healthy weight-lifting, contact Kevin Shepard, certified personal trainer and nutritionist at DC Ranch Village Health Club, at kshepard@dmclubs.com.