

Featured Article

To Lift or Not to Lift?



Strength Training and Regular Chiropractic Care

Engaging in a program of strength training provides numerous benefits for adolescents, young adults, and older adults. Strength training also represents a long-term commitment. The health and fitness gains you achieve via strength training are obtained over months and years, not days and weeks.

Strength training does involve the possibility of injury and it's important to minimize this risk as much as possible. No one wants to endure two or more weeks of downtime owing to a soft tissue injury that could have been avoided. One specific method of helping to ensure safe exercise sessions involves strict attention to proper technique. The second specific method is regular chiropractic care.

All of the physical work involved in strength training is based upon effective spinal biomechanics. Regular chiropractic care is focused on restoring optimal spinal alignment and detecting and correcting sources of nerve interference. By engaging in regular chiropractic care, you're helping to

ensure your ability to perform vigorous physical activity and reap the rewards of long-term health.

If a great Shakespearean protagonist had, anachronistically, joined a gym, his internal existential inquiry might have been, "To lift or not to lift?". Many centuries later, the identical inquiry, or controversy, persists. Joining a gym (health club) usually implies the new club member is going to engage in strength training in one form or another. Such exercise provides an abundance of benefits and is a valuable lifestyle choice for most people. But the possibility of injury exists. The key to safe, beneficial exercise is to learn how to do strength training correctly, then develop a plan, and follow the plan.

Government health and wellness guidelines recommend doing 150 minutes of (at least) moderate exercise per week. This translates to at least 30 minutes of exercise five times per week. Strength training is an important component of any exercise program designed to fulfill these recommendations. In combination with cardiorespiratory exercise, strength training greatly improves muscular capabilities and endurance. Your body becomes fit, toned, and honed, and as a result, you become much better equipped to successfully manage the mechanical stresses and strains that everyone encounters during the course of a normal day.¹⁻³

If you are new to strength training or haven't done this form of exercise in a while, then the most important rule is to start slowly. Scientifically determine how much weight you should be lifting by experimentation. Choose a very light weight and see whether you can do eight repetitions with that weight comfortably. If it's difficult to do eight reps, then start over with the next lighter weight. If it's too easy to do eight reps, then start over with the next heavier weight. If eight repetitions feels just about right, then that's the weight with which to begin that particular exercise. Follow these steps for each of your exercises and you'll have established your beginning routine on a personal and safe foundation.

Strength training need never become boring, as you can change your routine with almost infinite variety. For example, for a 12-week period you could do chest and back exercises one day, then leg exercises a second day, and shoulder and arm exercises a third day. You would do your cardiorespiratory exercise on the remaining two days (for a total of five weekly days of exercise). During a different 12-week period, you could do

cardiorespiratory exercise on three days and do arm and leg exercises on one day and chest, back, and shoulder exercises on a second day. Or you could choose to "work light" and exercise all your body parts on a single day. You could do your total-body strength training two or three days a week, filling in the other days with cardiorespiratory exercise. The only guideline in the context of these routine designs is whether the routine works for you. If it works, then it works.

As with all exercise programs, the more consistent you are, the greater long-term benefit you'll derive. Be sure to build-in recovery time by taking a week off here and there for rest and recharging. A modern Hamlet would find his or her exercise time enjoyable and rewarding, and would answer the perplexing question with a resounding, "Yes. I will lift."

¹Granacher U, et al: The importance of trunk muscle strength for balance, functional performance, and fall prevention in seniors: a systematic review. *Sports Med* 43(7):627-641, 2013

²Grier T, et al: The effects of cross-training on fitness and injury in women. *US Army Med Dep J* Apr-Jun:33-41, 2015

³Liu Y, et al: Effects of combined aerobic and resistance training on the glycolipid metabolism and inflammation levels in type 2 diabetes mellitus. *J Phys Ther Sci* 27(7):2365-2371, 2015

These are very good points. With expanded research funding it may be possible to fulfill the assumptions of parametric analysis with greater confidence.