Walk NEBRASKA

Gain Benefits From Regular Strength Training

Benefits--Along with aerobic exercise such as walking most days of the week, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals do weight bearing exercises 2-3 times each week. Strength training refers to exercise that requires your muscles to exert a force against some form of resistance, such as free weights. A personal fitness plan of strength training, along with regular aerobic exercise, can be very beneficial to one's health. Dr. Miriam Nelson and colleagues conducted a study in 1994, looking at the benefits of strength training in post-menopausal women. That study and subsequent research has shown that strength training improves:

- Muscle mass and strength
- Balance, reducing falls
- Bone density
- Arthritis symptoms
- Metabolic rate
- Glucose control & lipid profile
- Healthy heart tissue
- Mood and attitude
- Sound sleep
- Energy level

Importance--Strength training is especially important for women. As people age, the density of their bones decreases. Approximately 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, 80% of whom are women. One in two women will experience an osteoporosis-related fracture. Also, starting in their mid-forties, women lose ¼ to ⅓ pound of muscle per year and gain that much – or more – in fat. Arthritis affects more than 20 million Americans, and women are more commonly affected than men. Arthritis is a major reason why so many older adults are sedentary, which in turn results in an increase in joint stiffness and pain.

Safety--While strength training is beneficial for almost all people, it is important to check with your medical provider before beginning strength training if you have a chronic medical condition, back pain, joint problems, or are 70 years of age or older, so your physician may make necessary recommendations. Also, consider working with a professional fitness instructor for the first few weeks to master the correct exercise form. When done properly strength training should never cause pain but it should make you feel good.

Get started--As a direct response to the popularity of Dr. Nelson's book, Strong Women, Strong Bones, Tufts University developed a structured, safe, and effective strength-training program. For more information about the benefits of strength training for both men and women, and to add strength training to your personal fitness plan, check out the following website http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/growingstronger. With so many benefits how can you resist adding strength training to your fitness program today?

Know how. Know now.

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