

# *Why should I strength train?*

## *Question :*

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## *Answer :*

Proper strength training can help us to look better, feel better and function better. Here are 10 reasons why you should pick up your weights today and get started:

- 1. Strength training prevents muscle loss.** Adults who do not strength train lose between five to seven pounds of muscle every decade. While cardio exercise improves our cardiovascular fitness, it does not prevent the loss of muscle tissue.
- 2. Strength training will increase your metabolism.** Research shows that adding three pounds of muscle increases our resting metabolic rate by seven percent, and ups our daily calorie requirements by 15 percent. The average adult experiences a two to five percent reduction in metabolic rate every decade of their life, so strength training can help make up for that loss.
- 3. Strength training will increase your muscle mass.** Research shows that doing 25 minutes of strength exercise, three days a week can increase muscle mass by about three pounds over an eight-week training period. After that, muscle mass will continue to increase, but gains will differ from person to person depending on how much muscle has been lost through the years.
- 4. Strength training will reduce your body fat.** Increasing your muscle mass will increase your calorie burn, thereby reducing the likelihood of fat accumulation. Researchers found that strength exercise produced four pounds of fat loss after three months of training, even though the subjects were eating 15 percent more calories per day.
- 5. Strength training will increase your bone mineral density.** Studies show that four months of strength training can result in significant increases in bone mineral density, which is important because we naturally lose bone density as we age. In this way, strength training helps protect against fractures, "shrinking" and osteoporosis.
- 6. Strength training will improve your glucose metabolism.** Poor glucose metabolism is associated with adult onset diabetes. Researchers have reported a 23 percent increase in glucose uptake after four month of strength training. This improvement is one of the many ways a healthy exercise routine can fight diabetes.
- 7. Strength training will speed up your digestion.** A recent study showed a 56 percent increase in gastrointestinal transit time after three months of strength training. This is significant because delayed digestion puts you at a higher risk for colon cancer.

**8. Strength training reduces your resting blood pressure.** Strength training alone has been shown to reduce resting blood pressure significantly. Combining strength and aerobic exercise is an even more effective means of improving blood pressure readings. A recent study showed that after just two months of a moderate strength and cardio program, participants dropped their systolic blood pressure (the number on top which measures the pressure used when the heart beats) by 5 mm Hg and their diastolic blood pressure (the number on the bottom which measures the pressure that exists in the arteries between heartbeats) by 3 mm Hg.

**9. Strength training will relieve lower back pain.** Years of research on strength training and back pain show that strong back muscles are less likely to be injured than weaker back muscles. In a recent study, lower back pain sufferers had significantly less discomfort after 10 weeks of strength exercise for the lumbar spine muscles. Because over 80 percent of Americans experience back problems, it is advisable for all adults to strengthen these muscles properly.

**10. Strength training will reduce arthritis pain.** Studies show that sensible strength training eases the pain of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. This is good news, because most men and women who suffer from arthritis pain need strength exercise to develop stronger muscles, bones, and connective tissue.

I want to thank Wayne Westcott, Ph.D., for compiling this information. Wayne is the research director at the South Shore YMCA in Quincy, Massachusetts, and author of the college textbook *Strength Fitness*.

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