

Healthy Habits

from Prime of Life Fitness

I hear from women all the time that they don't like weight training because they don't want to "bulk up," they just want to "tone." Here's the good news: unless you plan to take steroids and monitor every bite of food you eat, you won't bulk up. But the bad news is that if you exclude weight training from your workout, you're missing out on one of the best ways to look and feel younger.

After our mid-thirties, we begin to lose a half pound of lean muscle tissue *per year* unless we're actively building muscle with resistance training. But most of us aren't actually losing any weight, so we're not just losing muscle, we're adding fat. Here are four good reasons to reverse that trend.

- **Muscle keeps you moving.** Strong muscles support your joints and keep you active, mobile and independent as you age. The muscles in your lower body help you walk on your own, climb up and down the stairs and get in and out of chairs. And you'll need those upper body muscles for picking up your grandkids and toting your luggage in your retirement travels.
- **Muscle burns calories and boosts metabolism.** Muscle tissue is more metabolically active than fat, which means that even when it's not working, it's burning more calories simply to stay alive. The real metabolic benefit of weight training, though, comes from using those muscles. After a workout, your muscles burn a lot of energy repairing, rebuilding and recovering. The greater your percentage of lean muscle tissue, the more calories you burn even at rest.
- **Weight training builds bones.** Bone tissue is continuously being broken down to supply the body with minerals and rebuilt to provide structural strength. When bone is subjected to stressful forces--like bearing the weight of the body or overcoming the resistance of weight training--it responds by producing more bone tissue. As an added bonus, the improved muscle function that comes from weight training can also help you maintain your balance which helps prevent falls from happening in the first place.
- **Weight training slows the aging process at a cellular level.** Weight training increases the mitochondrial content of muscle tissue. Mitochondria are the powerhouses of the cells, helping generate the energy that fuels cellular activity. With age, our mitochondria can begin to malfunction, resulting in wider cellular damage and visible signs of aging. A



number of studies have found that regular exercise including resistance training can slow or even reverse the malfunctioning of mitochondria. Resistance training has also been shown to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, lower resting blood pressure and improve blood lipid profiles.

Weight training doesn't have to mean going to the gym and hoisting barbells with big, sweaty dudes. You can get a great resistance workout with a couple of light dumbbells, a set of resistance bands or even just the resistance of your body weight. It doesn't matter how old you are or how much muscle you've already lost; you can still reverse the losses and get stronger--and younger--every day.

Action item: dust off those dumbbells and begin your weight training today. Strive to work all the major muscle groups to the point of fatigue (but not exhaustion) and allow 48-72 hours of recovery time between sessions.

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