

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

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STRENGTH TRAINING FOR A HEALTHIER YOU!

Strength training is an important part of any exercise program. Strength training refers to strengthening and conditioning the overall body in terms of muscular balance. Strength training strengthens the tendons, ligaments and joints to lower the risk of injury and increase the body's efficiency. The goal of a strength-training program is to correct any imbalances in the musculo-skeletal system, which greatly reduces the risk of injury to the muscles, tendons, and ligaments. With this goal obtained you will see improvements in the efficiency of your daily activities. For example, back pain is a common problem. This is especially true with people who must lift heavy objects and bend over constantly or with people who must sit for long hours. It would seem that these jobs are the cause of back pain. However, the real problem may be an imbalance in the muscles. Sitting for long hours in a non-supportive chair will cause certain muscles to relax, forcing other muscles to contract even more to compensate for the relaxed muscles. The result is back pain. A strength program is aimed at strengthening all muscles, both the major muscles and small supportive muscles. Therefore, a well-designed strength program would strengthen all muscles, allowing a person to lift and bend or sit for long hours without the pain.

A balanced muscular system is important for seniors and injury prevention. Overuse injuries are very common among seniors who have an unbalanced muscular system. Each muscle group has an antagonist, or opposite, muscle group. If both muscles are not equally strong, and equally flexible, the chance of injury is greatly increased. For example, the fronts of the thighs, the quadriceps, are usually better developed in most people than the back of the legs, the hamstrings. This imbalance increases the chances of pulling the hamstring muscles. In the case of the back pain, the abdominals often overpower the erector spinae muscles of the lower back causing excessive pulling, creating back pain. Overuse injuries develop over long periods of time. Without a conscious attempt to understand where the imbalances in your body exist, and taking steps to correct them, the stronger muscles become stronger, the weaker muscles become weaker, and the imbalance becomes greater.

There are often benefits to a strength-training program. Strength training will increase lean muscle tissue causing your metabolic rate to increase. Muscle burns more calories at rest than fat. Therefore an increase in muscle mass will result in faster and more efficient metabolism. Strength training coupled with some form of aerobic activity will result in a change in your body composition or muscle to fat ratio. While aerobics and dieting will help you lose weight, some of that weight is muscle and you may end up with a greater fat percentage than before you started. The combination of strength training and aerobic exercise will most effectively bring about changes to your body composition and also your personal appearance.

A strength-training program is one that strengthens the body, obviously. Generally, one to three sets are performed for each exercise. Usually, for strength purposes, 8 -12 repetitions are performed on each set. When using strength programs, all movements should be done with full control of the weight. This means you should use a slow controlled movement at all times. Proper form and slow controlled movements are the best techniques to achieve good results. When exercising, remember to warm up and stretch properly. When performing each exercise movement, be sure to use a full range of motion to ensure flexibility and a fuller contraction of the muscle. This type of program should be used **2 - 3** times per week. Advanced weight trainers may even try **4** days a week, but increasing the frequency of workouts any higher may result in over-training, thus working against the body and your goals.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.