

## *Weight Training For Women* **Dispelling the Myth**



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From, "I do not want bulky muscles," to, "muscles turn to fat when you stop lifting", there are many reasons why women think they should not lift weights. Even today when you walk into a gym, you will see a weight room dominated by males and a cardio or aerobics room dominated by females. It is not enough to perform aerobic training alone. Women need to step into the weight room and start lifting more challenging weights (and yes men need to do more aerobic training), but this issue is for the ladies.

Let us hit the first myth mentioned above. In order to build big, bulky muscles there needs to be plenty of the hormone testosterone present in the body. Women just do not have sufficient levels of this hormone (naturally) present in their bodies to build bulk. If you are on steroids, then yes lifting could cause you to bulk up, resistance training with weights alone will

not. As far as muscle turning to fat, that just is not physiological possible. What will happen from the lack of use is that muscle will atrophy. That means the muscle will lose size and strength, the use it or lose it syndrome.

It is so important to have a resistance training program designed and in use. The physical and mental benefits are vital to over all health. There are two big physical disorders that weight training will help immensely with and those are Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis. The first issue occurs due to bone mineral loss and effects more women than men. Unfortunately most people to not even know they are affected until a fracture of a bone occurs. This disorder is age related and lifting weights will go a long way in fighting it. There is a positive response to bone density as muscle stress is applied. The positive effects are a slowing of bone loss and an increase in bone density. The second disorder is also known as degenerative joint disease and is the most common type of arthritis. The pain and discomfort is felt most commonly in the joints of the knees, hips and fingers. What occurs is that the cartilage in these joints becomes stiff and becomes less elastic. The ability to absorb shock is lost and the actual bone on bone rubbing can and will take place. Resistance training will strengthen the muscles surrounding the affected joints and can help reduce the stress on that joint.

Feeling and looking stronger will increase one's self esteem and thus improve

one's mental outlook. The research is there that proves resistance training does a tremendous job in dealing with stress. Everyday activities, both personal and professional, can create stress in your life. Feeling good about you will go a long way in dealing with other issues that arise. Lifting weights will make muscles firmer and stronger. This is instant feedback as you watch the changes take place. When you increase muscle tone you also elevate your metabolism. This will help you burn more calories, even at rest. Remember that muscle is more dense than fat, so watch the change in inches before you watch the weight scale change.

The benefits of resistance training far out weigh those of not lifting weights. When you design your training program make sure you incorporate movements that utilize your own body weight, free weights and machine based movements. There will be more stabilization involved with your own body weight and free weights. Machine based movements involve no stabilization and are much harder to get hurt in, as your range of motion is pre-determined. Make sure that you work with a qualified professional when putting a program together. Even if you currently have a program, it will not hurt to have a certified fitness professional review it.

So, now that the myth has been put to rest, how about we see more ladies pumping iron in the weight room to complement that effort in the aerobics class.