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PUMP IT UP – Weight Training is Good for You! by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

When you think of working out with weights, you probably envision big guys with bulging muscles who have to wear XXXL t-shirts. Well – the good news is that this will likely not happen to you. That type of physique, takes years of training, specific diets (with lots of protein) and a certain body type. Most of us do not have the time, interest or body type for that.

Weight training has many benefits and is becoming the subject of a number of research studies. Working out with weights on a regular basis with a program designed by a professional (ie. chiropractor, physiotherapist, kinesiologist or certified exercise physiologist) will not only help to strengthen your muscles, but also improve your overall health.

Osteoporosis

As we get older, one of the biggest concerns is a loss of bone density. This refers to osteopenia (which is a lesser degree of bone loss) or osteoporosis. Having a bone density test at the diagnostic imaging or x-ray department at your local hospital, will provide a definitive answer as to whether you have bone loss, and if so to what degree.

But ' *hitting the weights* ' can help. Just as weight bearing activities such as walking and running can help you maintain or improve the density of the bones in your legs, hips, pelvis and lower back, exercising with hand weights or exercise tubing (also known as resistance training) can also help with the bones in your upper body.

Daily Activity Level

There are many activities we do every day that require strength to varying degrees:

- Taking out the garbage.
- Cleaning out the garage.
- Mowing the lawn.
- Working in the garden.
- Shovelling snow,
- Climbing out of the bathtub, or
- Opening that jar of pickles!

And research has backed it up! Dr. René Murphy from Acadia University, and his colleagues, have demonstrated that a home based exercise program that focused on strength training not only helps increase muscle strength and the amount of muscle tissue, but also improves the individual's mobility and ability to do activities that you and I would do every day and want to continue to do for a long time independently !

But it does even more –

Dr. Murphy's research team even found that the weight training also helped to reduce total cholesterol and low density lipo-proteins (LDL) in the blood. LDL is what is referred to as the ' *bad cholesterol* '.

The team also included a number of other blood tests that measured substances in our body that influence our immune function. Guess what? The results also suggested that because of the weight training, that the participants' immune systems were significantly better at fighting off viruses and bacteria. In other words, that means that you will likely have less episodes of the flu and head colds.

Dr. Murphy has been involved in another study that looked into research to see if there was a link between Type 2 diabetes, resistance training and innate immunity. Although further research is worthwhile, the article concludes that " *resistance training may provide a readily adopted lifestyle change that can be combined with dietary modification and other therapeutic approaches to combat the increasing problem posed by type 2 diabetes.* "

(Reference: DiPenta, Green-Johnson, and Murphy. Type 2 diabetes mellitus, resistance training, and innate immunity: Is there a common link? Appl. Physiol. Nutr. Metab. 32: 1025-1035 (2007)).

Get pumped up!

Yes this is good news! Who ever said research is not exciting is missing the point. 'Hitting the weights' can be beneficial to you in more ways than one.

"The results of the training program clearly indicate that inexpensive exercise program monitored by kinesiologists can reduce cardio-vascular risk factors and significantly improve muscle strength, immune function and independence of older people. Such programs could be an effective strategy to reduce the health care cost associated with an aging population".

(Reference: Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation – Research Advances Newsletter. Volume 8 (Winter) 2006).

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