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perfect fit

Worth the weight

INDIAN women still harbour the fear that weight training bulks up the body and takes away femininity. This is not true. Within limits, strength training actually adds to feminine grace and appeal. Fortunately, this the apprehensions are fast fading as more and more women are experiencing the benefits of resistance training. In fact, various researches show that women who moderately strength train on a regular basis enjoy an unending list of health advantages.

WEIGHT TRAINING HELPS

- # Increase muscle strength
- # Increase endurance
- # Sculpt the body
- # Decrease subcutaneous body fat
- # Increase flexibility
- # Increase bone density
- # Increase ligament and cartilage thickness
- # Cure osteoporosis in women
- # Boost performance in sports, swimming, athletics
- # Reduce risk of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and lower back pain
- # Relieve tension and stress
- # Increase self-confidence
- # Improve sleep
- # Induce discipline and motivation
- # Increase cardiovascular fitness
- # Normalise blood pressure
- # Increase life expectancy
- # Increase haemoglobin level & red blood cell count (the loss being due to menstruation & birth)
- # Improve quality of life
- # Rehabilitate the injured or handicapped
- # Decrease cholesterol levels
- # Increase power and speed
- # Improve reflex actions
- # Increase alertness
- # Decrease menstrual pain, correct menstrual disorders
- # Improve posture
- # Increase fertility

AND MORE...

You lose fat and inches

When embarking on a strength-training programme, start off gradually with two-three times per week. Research shows that depending on your programme and level of commitment, you can lose approximately one kg of fat per month initially.

You won't bulk up

Don't go pressing those panic buttons already! No, you're not going to end up looking like something on the cover of *Muscle & Fitness*! Unlike men, women don't bulk up as they lack in testosterone, which boosts bulking. You'll gain lean, long muscles.

Long-term fat control

Weight training increases metabolism. In other words, it helps burn a lot more calories, both at rest and at work. For each pound of muscle gain, it burns approximately 35-50 calories on a daily basis. So, for instance, if you gain three lbs of muscle and burn 45 extra calories per pound, you'll burn 135 more calories per day. This approximately means about 4,000 more calories per month, which in turn amounts to a loss of 12 lbs in a year!

Risk of getting following health disorders reduce

Low Back Pain: A recent 12-year study demonstrated that strengthening the low-back muscles had an 80 per cent success rate in eliminating/ reducing low-back pain. A combination of strengthening and stretching exercise contribute to a strong,

healthy, trouble-free back.

Heart Diseases: Weight training improves cholesterol profile and blood pressure status, which, in turn, keeps the heart healthy. For maximum effect, combine the training programme with cardiovascular activity.

Diabetes: Adult-onset diabetes is a growing problem. Recent studies show that

weight training can increase glucose utilisation in the body by 23 per cent in four months.

Arthritis: Joints are strengthened, arthritic pain is reduced and joint and muscle flexibility is improved.

Improves athletic ability

Whatever your choice of sport, strength training improves proficiency and

decreases risk of injury.

You'll be a she-man without looking like one

Moderate weight training increases a woman's strength by 30-50 per cent, thereby also increasing energy level and alertness.

Appropriate for even senior citizens

Numerous women have been weight trained even in their 70s and 80s. Studies show strength improvement is possible at any age. However, a professional should always supervise a senior participant's training.

FEW TIPS:

Progress gradually

Begin slowly and don't try taking on too much too soon. Over-ambition may lead to difficulty in coping and you may get disheartened and drop the programme altogether. Overload gradually, having given your body time to adapt to the activity on hand. Note that your genetic make up has a lot to do with your ability to lift weights.

Plan your work and then work your plan

Set goals and realistic time frames within which to achieve them. If you have more than a few goals, prioritise them. Work the details out with your trainer. Your progress can be tracked periodically with body monitors, measuring tapes or fitness testing.

Rotate exercises

Change your routine every four-six weeks for maximum effect. Your goals, fitness level and health condition should determine the type of exercise you perform, and the detail of their performance. This includes the number of sets and reps, choice of poundage and exercise variations among other things. Different exercises require different number of sets.

Allow recovery time

During workouts, the body needs to make internal adaptations in order to cope with the stress of the demands you've placed on it. The largest gains are made during recovery time. The length of rest period should depend on goals and not how long it takes to chat with a friend or drink water. When the goal is to build up muscular endurance, rest periods of less than a minute are advisable. Longer rest periods of more than three minutes are ideal when the goal is to increase strength and power.

Record your workouts

Keep a detailed record of the exercises. Note down the number of sets and reps, amount of resistance etc.

Don't be rigid

Be prepared to change your workout to accommodate personal circumstances, which include illness, injury, soreness, lack of time or energy, or even mood changes!

Before and after

Remember to both warm up and cool down. This will help avoid injury, prepare the body for the rigours of workout and stretch and relax muscles. Cooling down also brings the heart rate back to normal.

A word of caution

It's important to obtain medical clearance before embarking on a routine, along with any advice (in terms of recommendations or restrictions) from your medical practitioner. Ensure a fitness professional's supervision at all times. Happy pumping!

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Weight training for women: Nawaz Modi