

Weighing the Benefits of Weights

So there you are running, biking, or versa climbing as if you life depended on it. You step off the machine and sprint past the weight machines for fear they will yield results that make you look like a steroid junkie. This is a big mistake. Weight training can go a long way in your weight reduction program and we will explain how and why.

First of all we need to dispel the myth that as a woman if you weight train you may get “to big” Women simply do not have the hormonal disposition to pack on a lot of muscle. Simply put women have higher supplies of estrogen, not testosterone as men do. It is the testosterone that is a major factor in men packing on and retaining muscle.

With that in mind you may ask yourself...OK, if that is the case then why weight train at all. Well aside from the obvious reasons such as preventing osteoporosis and helping stabilize your joints, weight training plays a major role in weight reduction simply because muscle happens to be a very high maintenance tissue. According to the National Academy of Sports Medicine, muscle uses up 75-85 calories per pound per day. Compare this with fat tissue which will only burn up to 8 calories a day per pound and reason will dictate that the more muscle you have on your body, the more calories you will burn throughout the day.

Many women report that while on a weight-training program their weight may increase. This is simply because muscle tissue is more dense than fat tissue. Therefore although your weight may increase, it is likely your waistline can decrease at the same time. You can have two women of the same height, weight, and age, and one may be a size 12 and the other a size 8. This is because the woman who is a size 8 is weight training and altering her fat to muscle ratio. She is leaner but the difference in weight is made up of muscle, not fat tissue.

A common mistake among those looking to lose weight is to starve themselves. One of the first adjustments your body makes when you are undernourished is to shed its muscle and convert it to sugar for the body to use. Once this muscle is lost the body's overall metabolism slows down, making it even harder to lose weight and even easier to put it back on once you come off your starvation kick, because now there is no longer the same amount of muscle mass to eat up those calories. This is why it is important when weight training to make sure you are taking in enough calories to build and sustain the muscle you are trying to put on. A visit to an exercise minded Registered Dietician can help you determine your caloric needs based on your activity level. Please keep in mind; weight loss is a very loose term. Weight can be muscle or water and you do not want to lose either one. When we speak of weight loss we are really speaking of fat loss.

Lastly it is important to know what kind of weight training to do for weight loss. The questions are usually do I do lighter weights, more reps, or vice versa. The answer is to place more muscle on the body you will probably have to go a little heavier at fewer repetitions. If you feel you are looking to muscular then simply lower the weight and increase your repetitions to maintain what you have. Remember every muscle counts. Even your smaller groups such as your calves and arms are important because for every fiber of muscle you have developed you will burn that many more calories throughout the day. A healthy combination of weight training, cardiovascular activity, and proper eating goes a long long way.