Too Old for Strength Training?

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People often think that “Strength Training” is for young people only. However, studies show that strength exercises are effective for women and men of all ages whether you are 30 or 85. It is never too late to start strength training for older adults.

Growing older for many adults seems to mean an inevitable loss of energy and strength due to muscle loss. Older adults who become weakened may lack strength to do daily activities such as lifting objects, carrying groceries, climbing stairs, etc. Muscle loss can cause injuries and balance problems. It also contributes to falls in old age. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, one in every three adults 65 and older falls each year.

Muscle mass diminishes as we age. If we are not physically active over time, we continue to lose more muscle due to inactivity. Obviously, the effects of muscle loss can be prevented and reduced through physical activity. Muscle is just like the brain. If we don’t use it, we lose it. One of the best exercises to help enhance muscle mass is strength training. Strength training can help slow the process. Studies at Tufts University show that when people do strength training regularly, the training helps build bone, preserve strength, and prevent the loss of muscle mass and the development of chronic diseases.

No matter how old we are, we don’t have to get weaker with age. The oldest participant in my strength training class is 95 years old. Strength training helps us stay healthy and independent. If you are interested in attending strength training, make sure to consult with your doctor before you start the training. It can be beneficial and fun to do exercise with friends or other people in a group. Many people find social interaction and group exercise in a group help motivate them to continue exercising.

Benefits of Strength Training

Dr. Miriam Nelson of Tufts University and an author of several books including Strong Women, Strong Bones listed several benefits of strength training.

- Reduce arthritis pain and stiffness and increase flexibility and strength.
- Reduce risk of falls and increase balance.
- Increase metabolism by as much as 15% which is enormously helpful for weight loss and long-term weight control.
- Increase bone density.
- Prevent osteoporosis and frailty.
- Reduce the risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.
- Increase ability to do everyday tasks.
- Increase self-confidence and sense of well-being with a healthy state of mind.
- Improve Glucose Control.
- Reduce sleep problems and depression.
- Help manage diabetes.

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