

Resistance Training

By Andrea Michaud

When winter temperatures hit hard, you may find it difficult to maintain your fitness routine. But feeling physically fit can be a big part of your sense of well-being and confidence, so it's important to continue. The goal of your exercise program should be to reduce body fat and increase lean muscle tissue, while improving or maintaining good health. Along with cardiovascular exercise and proper nutrition, resistance training is an essential part of a well-rounded workout program. So what is resistance training and what are the benefits?

Resistance training involves moving a muscle through a full range of motion with the added resistance of free weights. It's also called weight training. You achieve muscle endurance and toning by increasing repetitions. A repetition is one full range of motion. It refers to how many times an exercise is repeated in one set. For example, if you do three sets of 10 repetitions on a bench press, it means doing 10 bench presses, resting and then repeating two more sets of 10 bench presses each. For maximum results, you should use enough weight to cause muscle fatigue.

Regular resistance training can build and tone muscles while increasing strength and endurance. It can also decrease the risk of osteoporosis, develop coordination and balance, prevent injuries resulting from weak muscles and help maintain lean body mass, which is especially important if you're trying to lose weight.

Since muscle weighs more than fat, the true indicator of your fitness level is not how much you weigh but your percentage of body fat. Fat requires no calories, but muscles are calorie hungry and your metabolism will run higher to maintain muscle tissue.

Everyone has an opinion on muscularity. How much is attractive? Men tend to want increased muscle size and definition, while women are more concerned with overall muscle tone. Some women fear that resistance training will make them look excessively muscular. The fact is, women can make remarkable gains in strength and muscle tone without developing muscular bulk.

Variety is the key to maintaining a fitness routine. Update your program regularly to maximize its effectiveness and keep your interest. Add resistance training to increase your lean body tissue and lose weight more effectively.

The bottom line? Pick up those weights and get lean.