



In Motion

Strength Training 101 – Needed for balanced fitness program

by the American Council on Exercise

Much has been written about the benefits of cardiovascular training. Until recently, however, little attention has been given to strength training, an important component of a balanced fitness program.

You do not need to be a body builder to benefit from strength training. A well-designed strength-training program can provide the following benefits:

Increased strength of bones, muscles and connective tissue (the tendons and ligaments), decreasing the risk of injury.

Increased muscle mass. Most adults lose about one-half pound of muscle per year after the age of 20. This is largely due to decreased activity.

Muscle tissue is partly responsible for the number of calories burned at rest (the basal metabolic rate or BMR). As muscle mass increases, BMR increases, making it easier to maintain a healthy body weight.

Enhanced quality of life. As general strength increases, the effort required to perform daily routines (carrying groceries, working in the garden) will be less taxing.

The core curriculum

Many exercises work all the major muscle groups. Neglecting certain groups can lead to strength imbalances and postural difficulties. You may wish to consult with a certified fitness professional to learn safe technique before beginning a strength-training program.

One set of 8-12 repetitions, working the muscle to the point of fatigue, is usually sufficient. Breathe normally throughout the exercise. Lower the resistance with a slow, controlled cadence throughout the full range of motion. Lifting the weight to a count of two and lowering it to a count of three or four is effective.

When you are able to perform 12 repetitions



Lt. j.g. Paul Csapo from Precommissioning Unit San Antonio (LPD 17) exercises to reduce stress, keep fit and reduce his risk of a heart attack

since heart disease runs in his family. "Exercise increases my stamina and endurance to be proactive in all endeavors for shipboard life," said Csapo.

of an exercise correctly (without cheating), increase the amount of resistance by 5 percent to 10 percent to continue safe progress.

Staying motivated

An encouraging aspect of strength training is the fact that you'll likely experience rapid improvements in strength and muscle tone right from the start of your program. Don't be discouraged, however, if visible improvements begin to taper off after a few weeks.

It's only natural that, as your fitness level improves, improvements in strength and appearance will follow at a slightly slower pace. To help keep your motivation up, find a partner to train with you.

Aim to exercise each muscle group at least two times per week, with a minimum of two days of rest between workouts. Training more frequently or adding more sets may lead to slightly greater gains, but the small added benefit may not be worth the extra time and effort (not to mention the added risk of injury).

Vary your program

Machines and free weights are effective tools for strength training, and a combination of the two is generally recommended. Utilizing both machines and free weights provides exercise variety, which is important for both psychological and physiological reasons.

Variety not only reduces boredom, but also provides subtle exercise differences that will enhance progress.

The benefits of strength training are no longer in question. Research continues to demonstrate that strength training increases both muscle and bone strength and reduces the risk of osteoporosis. A safe strength-training program combined with cardiovascular and flexibility training will give you.



SK1 Lance Powell from Commander Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic (CSFWL) includes pushups as one of his primary exercises in his workouts. He also includes situps, pullups, dips and the Stairmaster in the workouts he does three times each week. Powel said his personal exercise goals are to "get into shape for the long haul." He added he enjoys exercising because it makes him feel good to increase his strength and stamina.



Capt. Lawrence Arnold from HQMC Mid-Atlantic Region exercises to feel better, enjoy a healthy lifestyle and challenge myself. The Marine officer runs three days a week and lifts weights, such as this workout at the NAS Oceana Fitness and Sports Center, four days each week. He said exercise positively impacts his job by ensuring he's "always combat ready!" By scoring high on the Physical Readiness Test, Arnold said it demonstrates "leadership by example."

Photos by PH2 Greg Hathaway