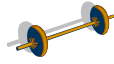




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# RESISTANCE TRAINING FOR HEALTH & FITNESS



By Steve Courson

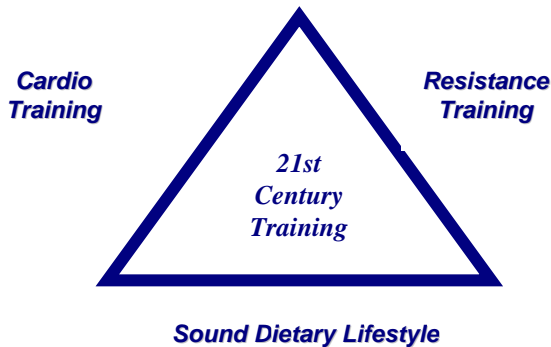


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Resistance training is a great and necessary component of any health and fitness program. What is resistance training? Any exercise performed against resistance is classified as resistance training. This could be free weights, weight machines, push-ups, pull-ups, sit ups & isometrics, pulling against heavy rubber bands. Another great way to train is to use your own body weight or light dumbbells and train with a large exercise ball which incorporates the use of stabilizer muscles.

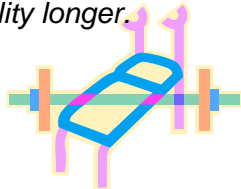


In any sound fitness program, three components should exist. The first is cardiovascular training, then resistance training and finally a healthy dietary lifestyle. Think of it as the three sides of a triangle.



All three sides bear equal importance but always remember it is the synergy of the three which are the key to success.

There are many myths associated with resistance training. The first is that it is only appropriate for young people. Nothing could be further from the truth, as studies have shown that resistance training is instrumental in preventing osteoporosis and helps older people maintain mobility longer.



Another well known myth is that women who engage in resistance training will develop large bulky muscles. Truthfully, this is only possible in women who have either a rare high level of testosterone (male hormone) or are using anabolic drugs. Most women will develop shapely muscle if they train intelligently.



Sophisticated weight training programs have slowly evolved through primarily the world of elite sport. The use of weight training for years was limited to small pockets of the athletic and weight training sub-culture. Lately, through the spread of scientific training information, a variety of studies and the general advance of societal knowledge has made a greater amount of the public aware of the benefits of a sound resistance training program.

However, one must also recognize that there is a large difference between the resistance training regimen geared for the health of a mature adult than one geared for a high performance elite athlete. Athletes train intensely with high impact (heavy weights) movements designed to surpass previous performance barriers. Resistance training for the mature population is geared to challenge one whose training is designed to work muscle groups emphasizing high repetition sets (lighter weights) as opposed to training low repetition with heavy weight. This is known as low impact resistance training.



The benefits of low impact resistance training are many. Here are the principle ones:

- 1.) prevention of osteoporosis
- 2.) strengthens and shapes muscle
- 3.) enhances metabolism

- 4.) strengthens heart
- 5.) raises natural HGH levels
- 6.) relieves stress
- 7.) helps support joints
- 8.) elevates self esteem
- 9.) prolongs mobility

The importance of doing low impact training for the mature population is based on gaining the benefits without overloading joints and connective tissues. This can be accomplished using the overload principle, using repetitions instead of heavy weight. High repetition sets recruit and fatigue muscle fiber which accomplishes the purpose of training. The theory of resistance training is based on using the overload principle to tear down muscle groups then allowing them to grow stronger through rest and recuperation. Resistance training “shocks” the muscle to stimulate growth. Changing routines periodically is always a good form of “shock treatment”. Nutrition is a vital component in the recuperation process. I believe that a minimum of 48 hours of rest is required between training a specific body part.

The older one gets, the smarter one needs to train! That means tailoring your workout to your needs as well as your age. As we get older, we should train lighter.

If you have access to a fully equipped gym facility and you are a beginner, then I would recommend a circuit training program doing 10-12 upper and lower body part exercises in rotating succession working the large muscle groups: legs, glutes, shoulders, back and chest with arms, trapezoids, abdominals and obliques last.

Free weights can be used, however, strict attention to form is imperative especially for beginners. Certain high risk exercises such as power cleans, squats and dead lifts are only appropriate primarily for competitive weight lifters, athletes or body builders.

Remember wellness training is geared to a lifetime fitness mentality versus training for a specific athletic event. The more you make it your lifestyle, the more success you are likely to experience.

This mentality of training or the “low impact” approach involves doing working sets of reps in the 10-20 rep range. A beginner would be put through a one set high repetition circuit training regiment of 10-12 exercise movements. Eventually that person would advance to completing three sets per exercise movement with short rest between sets and before moving to next exercise movement.

If you are doing or attempting a resistance training program at home, much depends on your budget, your inventiveness and your commitment to your routine. Some people have elaborate home gyms that are a serious financial investment. Yet, for relatively little money, items like exercise balls, light dumbbells, resistance rubber bands, chin-up bars, and videos are all components of an effective low cost program. How creative are you?



In summary, it is important to remember that again recuperation is the key to a sound resistance training program. You must get adequate rest between training sessions along with proper nutrition. The more disciplined you are with your routine the greater success you can achieve. You must be careful however not to over train. Symptoms of over training are:

- 1.) decrease in body weight
- 2.) decrease appetite
- 3.) sleep disturbances
- 4.) elevated heart rate
- 5.) elevated blood pressure
- 6.) muscle tenderness
- 7.) nausea

If you are experiencing a combination of these, you probably need to cut back in your training. Good Luck & Happy Training!



My comments are based on personal experiences. I am not a licensed dietician or physician and do not speak for Head Start or any other organization. Any specific comments or questions about what may be beneficial for any individual should be directed to a physician, nurse or licensed dietician.

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