

Three Good Reasons To Lift Weights

International Council on Active Aging

Research has shown that strengthening exercises are both safe and effective for women and men of all ages, including those who are not in perfect health. In fact, people with health concerns - including heart disease or arthritis - often benefit the most from an exercise program that includes lifting weights a few times each week.

Strength training regularly can be very powerful in reducing the signs and symptoms of numerous diseases and chronic conditions. Three good reasons to strength train are to relieve arthritis pain, aid balance to prevent falls, and strengthen bones.

Arthritis Relief

Tufts University recently completed a strength-training program with older men and women with moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis. The results of this 16-week program showed that strength training decreased pain by 43%, increased muscle strength and general physical performance, improved the clinical signs and symptoms of the disease, and decreased disability.

The effectiveness of strength training to ease the pain of osteoarthritis was just as potent, if not more potent, as medications. Similar effects of strength training have been seen in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Restoration of Balance and Reduction of Falls

As people age, poor balance and flexibility contribute to falls and broken bones. These fractures can result in significant disability and, in some cases, fatal complications. Strengthening exercises, when done properly and through the full range of motion, increase a person's flexibility and balance, which decrease the likelihood and severity of falls. One study in New Zealand in women 80 years of age and older showed a 40% reduction in falls with simple strength and balance training.

Strengthening of Bone

Post-menopausal women can lose 1-2% of their bone mass annually. A 12-month study conducted on postmenopausal women at Tufts University demonstrated 1% gains in hip and spine bone density, 75% increases in strength and 13% increases in dynamic balance with just two days per week of progressive strength training.