

Supercharge Your Health with Strength Training

By Richard J. Wolff, RD, LDN

With thousands of products promising to supercharge your health, it can be difficult to recognize a true superstar when one comes along. Believe it or not, strength training has the credentials to be that superstar! Recent research indicates that strength training has the potential to prevent and possibly reverse the impact of chronic disease. Yes, possibly reverse the impact of chronic disease! This is hard to believe for Americans who think only athletes should worry about strong bodies. Experts agree it's time to shift our thinking when it comes to strength training.

Unlike cardio-respiratory exercise, strength training has the potential to generate meaningful health benefits with brief, infrequent workouts. This is great news for busy Americans who can't find the time to work out. With a list of health benefits that keeps growing, health agencies now endorse strength training as an essential health habit. Here's how strength training just twice a week can literally supercharge your health.

Preventing Heart Disease

Building a strong body isn't what most people think of when considering heart health. However, using strength training as a tool to prevent and treat heart disease is well established. According to a review in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*¹, numerous high quality, evidence-based studies have demonstrated the cardiovascular benefits of strength training. Recent evidence also suggests that strength training may be effective at preventing and lowering high blood pressure².

Maintaining muscular strength has also been linked to increased survival rates for those with Chronic Heart Failure. A study in the *European Journal of Heart Failure* has linked muscle strength to survival rates of those with severe congestive heart failure. The American Heart Association has also recognized the cardiovascular benefits of strength training and recommends adults add strength training to their lifestyle for its heart health benefits.

Beating Diabetes

The diabetes-muscle connection is one most Americans miss. This is unfortunate given diabetes contributes to 200,000 deaths annually and is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States. Several large scientific reviews have shown that strength training may help manage and reduced the risk of type 2 diabetes. Research suggests that building muscle improves blood sugar control by increasing the body's ability to store and process glucose (blood sugar). According to Dr. Tim Church, MD, MPH, PhD, of the Pennington Biomedical Center, "*The biggest consumer of sugar in the blood is muscle. If you keep your muscles happy, they chew up massive amounts of sugar*"³.

We see this change with our diabetic clients. The ones who follow our strength program experience reductions in blood sugar. In a preemptive move, the American Diabetes Association also recommends strength training as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Staying Strong with Arthritis

Exercise scientists have discovered symptoms of knee arthritis are associated with muscle weakness. In a 2008 review, strength training was shown to be effective at reducing knee pain and improving function among individuals with osteoarthritis. Strong muscles improve joint integrity while contributing to both formal and informal physical activity. Increased activity improves circulation and the delivery of nutrients to tissues throughout the body. Better nutrition translates into healthier tendons, ligaments, cartilage and bone.

It's Never Too Late

One of the most damaging changes linked to muscle loss is a decrease in physical function. As physical function decreases, older adults are at an increased risk for disability, institutionalization and morbidity (death). Strength training has been shown to improve several measures of functional performance among older adults⁴. According to Dr. Miriam Nelson, exercise scientist at Tufts University, *"Muscle is the absolute center piece for being healthy, vital, and independent as we grow older."*

Exercise scientists used to think that losing muscle was a natural part of aging. We now know that inactivity (our lifestyle) contributes more to muscle loss than aging does. According to Andrew Weil, M.D., professor of medicine at the University of Arizona, *"You can start strength training and benefit from it at any age."* It's clear there are numerous health benefits to be gained by strength training. Given that the older you get, the more benefits there are. Now is the perfect time to supercharge your health with strength training!

Get Some Help

MEDFITNESS is a privately owned company whose mission is to build healthy lifestyles. We specialize in personal training programs for as little as \$99 per month. Our strength workouts strengthen and condition your entire body in less than 30 minutes. To experience our remarkable program, schedule a *Free Trial Workout* by calling (630)762-1784. To get information about our program, visit www.medfitnessprogram.com.

Richard J. Wolff, RD, LDN is the president of **MEDFITNESS** and holds a degree in nutritional science from Northern Illinois University. Richard is a Registered Dietitian and Licensed Nutritionist. To get additional strategies on how to improve your nutrition and exercise habits, visit the *Fitness Articles* page at www.medfitnessprogram.com.

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