

Fewer Workouts, Better Results

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Research linking muscular strength to better health continues to grow every year. Evidence supporting this link is so strong that major health agencies now include strength training in their exercise guidelines. In 2008 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued the first ever *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. These guidelines served as a call to action recommending that all adults engage in muscle-strengthening exercises.

The learning curve for building strength dates back to research at Massachusetts General Hospital in the 1940's. Today, exercise scientists agree that increasing strength requires deep muscle fatigue. The safest, most efficient way to reach deep muscle fatigue is to engage in muscle-strengthening exercises such as strength training. Activities like running, swimming, biking and hiking do not require the kind of intense muscular work necessary to achieve deep muscle fatigue. Therefore, these activities are limited in their ability to build strength.

As important as deep muscle fatigue is, it is only effective when combined with adequate rest. During the rest phase, muscles become stronger and healthier. Unfortunately, many people overlook rest. In fact, some mistakenly believe more is better when it comes to strength training. Fortunately, this isn't true. Your body needs time to recover from the stress of a demanding strength workout.

According to the National Strength and Conditioning Association, insufficient inter-training rest (rest between workouts) leaves your muscles unable to perform at their best. In its most comprehensive set of guidelines to date, the American College of Sports Medicine makes a strong case for rest, recommending 48 to 96 hours (2 to 4 days) between strength workouts.

To get the most from your strength program at MEDFITNESS, rest at least 2 to 4 days between workouts. This translates into 2 full-body strength workouts per week. Exceeding 2 workouts per week will limit strength gains and contribute to overtraining syndrome.

This is good news for those who struggle with busy schedules. Improving your health is easier than you think. Two workouts per week can significantly increase strength while improving your health at the same time.