



## **Do It Right**

*By Joe Stein, President*



Congratulations! You have kept your New Year's resolution regarding strength training. The year started out fast and furious with strong motivation to tone your body. However in February, you hit a speed bump or two. By March, the wheels were starting to come off. Now it's April and time to re-energize. If you are going to work out, you might as well do it right. What follows are some of the most common mistakes made by beginning exercisers...and what to change to get the most from your workouts.

### **Lifting Too Little Weight**

If you can perform an exercise too easily for several sessions in a row, the weights are too light. To obtain the benefits of strength training, the weights must be heavy enough so the last few repetitions are difficult but can still be performed with good form.

### **Lifting Too Much Weight**

If you cannot maintain your form to the end of a set, you are lifting too much weight. Lifting too much weight before you are ready can cause injury. The number of repetitions in each set and the number of sets needs to be developed to meet your specific abilities and goals.

### **A Warm Up Is a Must**

Before lifting weights, it is critical to warm up properly. Simulating the movements of the exercises without weights will prepare your neuromuscular system as well as raise your core temperature. Increased blood flow to muscles and increased production of synovial fluid in joints are important to maximizing your potential and preventing injury.

### **Stretching is Essential**

How many times have you seen a person complete a workout and immediately leave the gym without stretching? It is important to stretch muscles exerted during your session. Stretching in a slow, static and deep manner has many benefits:

- Decreased the risk of injury
- Reduced post-exercise soreness
- Increased flexibility

Stretching should be done to the point of feeling a tingling sensation, not to the point of pain.

### **H<sub>2</sub>O for Life**

As you exercise, your body creates waste products that need to be removed. At the same time, your muscles are demanding more nutrients. Water is the solution to both transportation problems. Drink eight ounces of water before you start. Then drink another six to eight ounces every half hour or so while exercising. After your cool down and stretching, drink another six to eight ounces.

### **Exercise All Major Muscle Groups**

A well-trained person has balance and symmetry between all major muscle groups. Don't be one of those people who spends a lot of time and effort on the "show" muscles...the chest, abs, shoulders and arms at the expense of the "go" muscles: legs, obliques and back. These muscles are important for balance and core stability.

### **Bad Form**

Learn from a professional how to perform the proper strength training exercises through the full range of motion. This is especially true if you exercise with free weights. If you exercise with machines, the seat height and other adjustments must be set correctly to prevent injury and assure maximum effectiveness. Allowing momentum to swing the weights, exercising too fast, using body English and exhibiting improper biomechanics are among the most common breaches of good form.

### **Badly Designed Workout Routine**

Many people, especially Baby Boomers and Seniors, often stop exercising because of injuries. Lack of results has also been cited as a major reason for stopping. A well designed exercise routine will greatly increase the chance of achieving lasting results as well as reduce the risk of injuries.

Working the larger muscle groups first, then the smaller ones is a conservative, safe approach to strength training. As mentioned earlier, exercise all major groups. Do not exercise the same muscles two days in a row. During the "rest" day between sessions, muscles are rebuilding and getting the nutrients they need to grow. Having a certified personal trainer change your routine each month will keep you challenged so your body won't plateau.

### **Ask Questions**

There is a lot of misinformation out there! Many of the things you may have learned in high school have been shown to be less than effective, some even dangerous. If you have questions about the design and implementation of your exercise routine, ask a certified personal trainer for help. Remember, the only stupid questions are those not asked.

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