

# Just So You Know

## STRENGTH TRAINING BENEFITS MORE THAN JUST MUSCLE

BY DIANE WOOD

I will never forget my first visit to the doctor after I began running. He took his stethoscope to listen to my heart, paused for what seemed forever, and with a puzzled expression on his face he replied, "Well, I know that you are alive because your sitting right in front of me...are you a runner? Your heart rate is barely existent!" Never was I more proud to say that I was a runner. The cardiovascular benefits of running are undeniable. No matter if you run a few short miles a week or you log miles upon miles, running is a highly effective and efficient means of aerobic conditioning. So you may be asking yourself...why do I need to do anything else?

Although running gives the quickest results in area of cardiovascular fitness, overall fitness requires more than just cardiovascular fitness, according to Dr. Stephen M. Pribut, a podiatrist with special interests in Sports Medicine and Biomechanics. One must throw the combination of muscle endurance, strength, and flexibility into the equation as well. Strength training is a key tool to gaining overall fitness and optimal health. Consider this quote by Dr. Steven M. Horwitz, a certified Chiropractic Sports Physician, Strength and Conditioning Specialist, USA Weightlifting Club Coach, and sports nutritionist, "When we discuss strength training with our patients/clients, we tell them to think of the human body as an automobile engine. It can be four, six or eight cylinders. All three can go 100 miles per hour, but the eight-cylinder engine will get there faster, maintain that speed, and do both with less wear and tear. Increasing muscle strength and lean body mass (adding muscle without necessarily adding weight) is like adding cylinders to an engine."

Strength training benefits athlete's and non-athletes alike. There are numerous reasons for incorporating it into your weekly routine. Let's examine each:

### RUNNING SPECIFIC BENEFITS

#### Greater Muscle Strength And Endurance

The ability to resist fatigue can allow you to hold a set pace for longer or too increase speed over a given distance.

#### Greater Joint Flexibility

One of the most important benefits of weight training for runners is increased stability around the joints of the lower body. Having stronger joints will provide better durability to handle the impact of running.

#### Better Body Composition

Strength training increases lean body mass and decreases body fat. Studies show that muscle burns more calories over a longer period of time than steady state cardiovascular exercise. Muscle boosts your metabolism and creates a longer calorie afterburn. Lean muscle improves the ability to run more powerfully. "Muscle works for you when you run; fat just comes along for the ride", says Claire Kowalchik, former managing editor of Runners World magazine.

#### Reduced Injury Risk

### FACTS THAT MOST PEOPLE OVERLOOK

- **Every running strides places about three times the weight of your body on your foot, ankles, knees, and hip joints.** Both acute and overuse injuries can be prevented by strength training.
- **Endurance exercise catabolizes muscle tissue.** Strength training in a progressive fashion will help preserve muscle, and ideally, add more muscle and strength to run faster, longer.
- **As we age, the more tendency we have to carry a few extra pounds due to a decrease in metabolic rate.** Resistance exercise can raise metabolic rate, an important factor in maintaining body weight.
- **Aging can lead to a decrease in bone density and brittleness.** Strength training has been shown to build bone.
- **As we age, muscles gradually decrease in size and strength in the process called "atrophy".** Strength training builds and maintains muscle strength and tone.
- **Humans lose 5 pounds of muscle every decade after age 30.**

Running is a high impact sport. If there's one thing I think we all can agree on, it's this. The repetitive pounding encountered mile after mile places great demands on the muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints. Strength training protects your body from injuries in several ways. The muscles fibers themselves are strengthened which will help prevent muscle pulls and tears. Muscle mass is increased which will help provide support to the joints, which are absorbing much of the impact of running. All of the connective tissues, which include ligaments and tendons, are made stronger. This will help avoid strains, sprains and tendonitis.

## **OVERALL FITNESS BENEFITS**

### **Speeds Up Your Metabolism**

Strength training increases lean muscle which in turn causes body to burn more calories throughout the day. For example, every 3 pounds of muscle you build, you'll burn an extra 120 calories a day.

### **Improved Balance, Flexibility, Mobility And Stability**

Stronger and more resilient muscles improves our balance, means more comfortable living & fewer falls or accidents.

### **Decreased Risk Of Coronary Disease**

A consistent strength training program has been shown to be associated to many different health benefits including decreasing cholesterol and lowering blood pressure.

### **Prevent Osteoporosis**

Studies have shown that consistent strength training can increase bone density and help prevent Osteoporosis.

### **Keeps Us Youthful**

As we age, the body starts to lose muscle mass and bone density. Strength training is a means of preventive action by keeping the body strong and helps ward off frailty and lack of balance that can come with old age.

As you can see, strength training is a vital component of any runners and non-runners training regime. It increases your flexibility and boosts your energy levels, thereby enabling you to workout harder. As a whole, you feel active and young, when your joints and muscles feel stronger. You look fresh and feel enthusiastic about carrying out your favorite activities. In one way, it can be said that, it's a fabulous strategy for ensuring that your aging takes place gracefully. It is never too late to start!

Personally, strength training has not only transformed how I look and feel, it has decreased my running times tremendously. I feel strong and healthy and continuously hear, "I can't believe how strong you are, you look so little!" I will never give it up. All it takes is twice a week, 15-20 minutes. Want to see what I do? Join me on Tuesday nights!

## **QUIZ**

See if you can benefit from strength training by answering the following:

- Do your arms, shoulders, and/or back feel tired at the end of a race or long run?
- Do you have trouble finishing races strong?
- Does your training lack due to injuries?
- Are your running times stagnant?
- Do you feel older than you are?
- Is your weight loss at stand still?

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If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may benefit from incorporating strength training into your weekly workouts.

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If you have any questions or topics in which you would like to find out more about, please contact me at: [dwood5555@gmail.com](mailto:dwood5555@gmail.com). Stay tuned for the next bimonthly Just So You Know article.

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Last time I checked, I have a degree in Business. I am just an avid runner who loves to read. Most of my material comes from online resources, books, and of course, my own experiences. Enjoy!