

FIT FACTS FOR BUSY BODIES

LATER LIFE WEIGHT GAIN

**By
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QUESTION:

I just turned 40 on my last birthday. I have always been recreationally active and participated in “aerobic” workouts such as jazzercise and riding a bike, but these exercises don’t seem to be enough to keep my weight down. Lately, I have been hearing that weight training is very important for females in many ways. Can you tell me why weight training is so important and if it can help me lose weight?

ANSWER:

First of all, weight training is very beneficial for both men and women for overall fitness. As far as losing weight or keeping the weight off, your body’s musculature places an important role. That is why males have an easier time keeping their weight down than females...because they usually have more musculature. Weight training is important for weight loss because, not only are you burning calories while you are working out, but if you are consistent with your workouts and challenge your muscles each time you work out, your muscle physiology will change over time and you will have more active cells that contribute to your body’s calorie burning capability. Essentially, the more muscle you have, the more energy your body uses, therefore you burn more calories than a non-muscular, sedentary person. In addition to burning calories, weight training tightens and sculpts your muscles. When you lose body fat, you will see more definition and shape in your muscles and your physique will be better. You won’t jiggle as much when you walk!

Another critical issue for women is osteoporosis. Weight training is the best exercise for helping to prevent bone density loss. Weight training increases bone density more than any other type of exercise. Aerobic type exercises are beneficial for increasing bone density in the legs, because that is where most of the stress occurs. However, they do not help much with the mid- and upper body. Because weight training is so area specific, there is stress placed on the bones where each muscle attaches to the bone. When you work out every major muscle group in your body, you are increasing bone density in each of those areas.

Last, but not least, weight training strengthens muscles, tendons and ligaments and increases joint flexibility. Both of these areas are essential to making our bodies more capable and functional in performing any movement we do any time. Weight training is important for injury prevention in activities we do outside of the gym, such as lifting children, house cleaning, lifting bags of groceries from the trunk of your car, gardening, etc.

Weight training should be a mandatory part of everyone’s exercise program. It really does not have to be time consuming. With a good trainer, you can learn an effective and time-efficient routine that can be performed two to three times per week for 30-45 minutes.