

The Benefits of Resistance Training

Why we train the way we do...

by Fitness Trainer Jacob Dickson

In your personal fitness training sessions with me, most of you spend the majority of the time performing resistance training. Lifting weights, using elastic bands, performing body-weight exercises (push-ups, squats, etc.), using machines with cable pulleys – these are all examples of resistance training. While we all know *that* it benefits us, we aren't always clear on all the *ways* it benefits us.

- 1) **Muscle Strength/Tone:** The most obvious benefits of our resistance training sessions are increased *strength* and *muscle tone*. These are the reasons most of you began training with me. You can diet all you want, and run 5 miles a day, and at the end of the day, the best you could look is *skinny*. With resistance training, you will build stronger, more defined muscles that will make you look infinitely healthier – because you will be! The strength and endurance gains make everyday life easier: carrying groceries, playing with your kids, playing sports, even getting in and out of your car. In addition, a trained body is far less prone to injury, because your body will be stronger and more balanced. On the cosmetic level, trained muscles are denser and more defined. You'll have better posture and exhibit more personal confidence. An athletic body is far more attractive than the body achieved by diet alone, since the body weight lost through a low-calorie diet alone is typically over 25% lean muscle mass.
- 2) **Metabolism:** Muscle even helps you to burn fat. Before you get too excited, I'll say that your lifting workout is *not* going to burn calories like a cardiovascular routine. You're not going to drop five pounds per week by beginning a weight-training program alone. That being said, you will have significant increases in your natural metabolism, the amount of energy you burn each day. When we lift, we break down our muscles with microscopic tears, forcing our body to repair them better than they were before. This stronger, denser muscle requires more calories than before *just to maintain*. For instance, adding a pound of muscle mass to your body will cause you to burn an extra 50 calories every day, even while you sleep. That's a pretty good deal.
- 3) **Injury Prevention and Sustained Independence:** Resistance training has been proved numerous times to increase bone mass and bone mineral density in people of all ages, even the elderly. This is especially important for women, who are at an increased risk for osteoporosis. It is the weight-bearing nature of resistance training that promotes healthy bone growth. This is one of the reasons why we perform many of our exercises standing up, or on balance balls and boards. The higher your bone density, the less likely you are to sustain injury in life's activities. Which brings me to the next point...stability. The balance and stability we foster during our weight lifting routines is invaluable as we go through our daily lives, and especially as we age.

The conclusion? We lift because it makes us stronger and healthier, it increases our metabolism so we don't have to starve ourselves to lose body fat, and it fortifies our bodies against injury and aging. Plus, we get to make funny sounds when we lift.