

Weightlifting:

Why it's Important for Women

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If you want to lose body fat, gain confidence, increase bone density, and be toned and fit, you have to lift weights. I don't care if you are a man or woman.

When I first got into the fitness industry, women lifting weights was seen as a little taboo.

Women were wrongfully categorized in the world of fitness: they were either a bodybuilder, who stuck out like a sore thumb, a cardio queen spending endless hours on the elliptical machine or a group aerobics junkie performing the same routine, class after class.

We have come a long way since then but not far enough. The recent movement of CrossFit and Olympic lifting has helped changed the fitness game for women, that's for sure.

Endless memes and quotes on social media have empowered women across the world to embrace the weightlifting realm. While this has been an amazing movement in fitness for women, there are still many people out there who still believe that lifting weights will cause excessive muscle growth, thus leading to a "less feminine" physique.

Many of you understand that this is far from the truth. For the men reading this article, you probably understand that gaining a significant amount of muscle is not all that easy. The avid weightlifter looks to gain muscle for many years and in reality, they don't get that much bigger. They want to get bigger, but it's just not that easy.

There are many variables that cause muscle growth and one of the most influential variables is hormones. Men have a clear advantage since our primary sex hormone is testosterone, a hormone that helps build muscle during certain parts of a male's life. Females, on the other hand, produce mostly estrogen and less testosterone.

A female's hormonal environment is not optimal for appreciable muscle growth. Lifting weights will not naturally result in huge and masculine looking muscles. It simply doesn't happen that easily.

Besides, what exactly is bulky and masculine for women? The recent CrossFit Games showed physiques on women that are unbelievable. The combination of muscle, leanness, and performance is unmatched. I often hear people

say how “un-feminine” some of the ladies looked. They were “too big, looked like they were on steroids and did not look attractive.”

Of course, this is a matter of opinion, but let’s think about it here. Would you call someone that was overweight or obese unfeminine? Would you call them “too bulky?” That isn’t cool. What about someone who is “too skinny” or someone who is “skinny-fat?” Are they unfeminine, less of a woman or unattractive because of the way they look? Again, these things are a matter of opinion.

Just because a woman loves to lift weights does not put them into any category of fitness. It simply means that they care about their body. They want to feel good, move better and increase their quality of life. In my opinion, that’s pretty attractive.

Find What Works For You

I have always kept an open mind in this profession because it is important that trainers keep adding to their “toolbox.”

Trying different methods of training and exercise like yoga, Pilates, and running has allowed me to better relate to my clients. If I had never tried it, how could I knock it? Now, don’t get me wrong. Yoga, Pilates, running and other forms of fitness all have their own benefits, but are not great for gaining necessary muscle to have a toned appearance.

I noticed the same results when my clients would partake in these forms of exercise. My clients that were not lifting weights more than once per week and were engaging in these forms of exercise like yoga, Pilates, or running were not seeing the results that they desired.

Some of my female clients kept asking me how much cardio they should be doing in order to lose body fat. When my answer was “none,” they didn’t understand. I had to educate them on why more cardio does not mean more fat loss.

I would have my clients track their workouts by logging them for 2 weeks, or more. We would then analyze how much cardio they were doing in a week and then compare it to how much weight training they were doing. The cardio would win by a large margin. They also realized that this might be the reason why they are stuck with the same body even after working out so much. It was frustrating for all of us.

The bottom line is if you are running, on the bike, doing yoga and occasionally throwing around light dumbbells, you will get minimal results in fat loss, increasing bone density, and muscle tone.

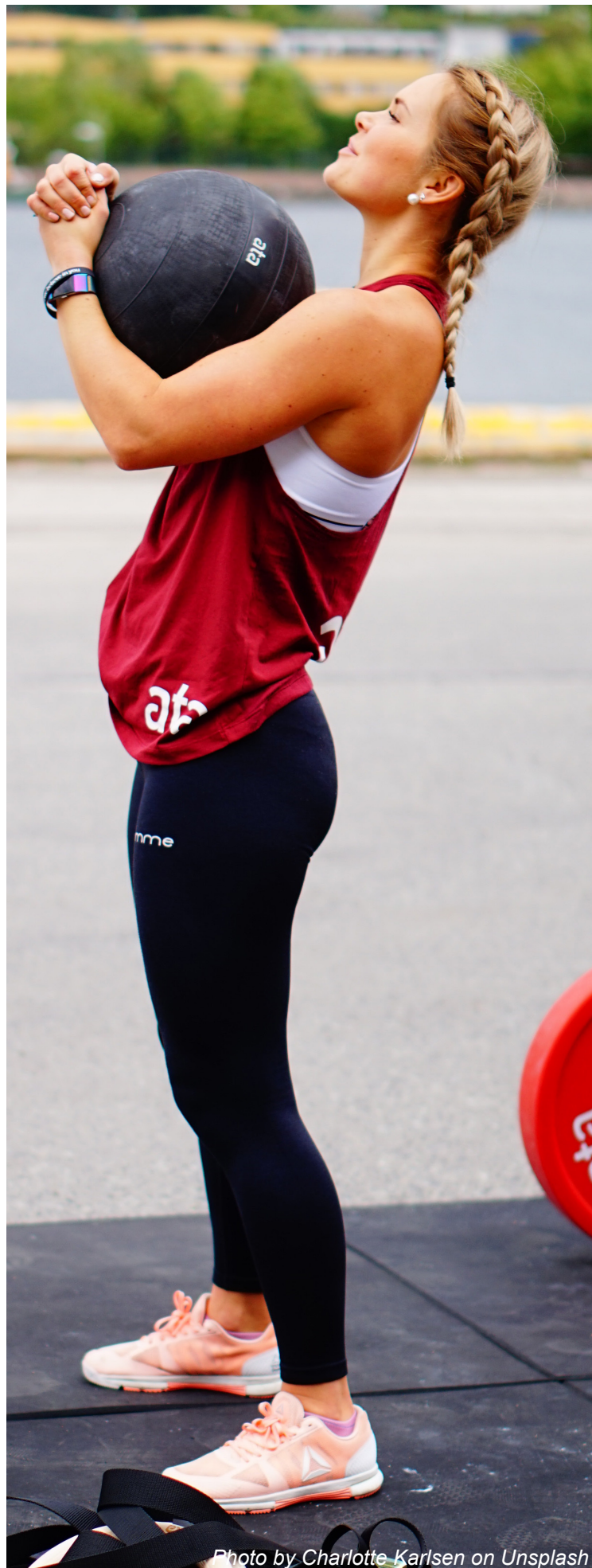



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Why Lifting Weights is So Important

Metabolism, Your Bones, Confidence & Being Strong

Photo by John Arano on Unsplash

The most important reason that you should be lifting weights is to lose fat and build muscle.

More Muscle Equals a Higher Metabolism

The effect that lifting weights has on your body composition is profound.

The more muscle a woman has, the more calories she will burn at rest. So basically, muscles speed up your metabolism, resulting in more fat loss.

Strength training is important because it helps counteract muscle loss associated with aging. And since muscle tissue burns more calories than fat tissue does, muscle mass is a key factor in weight loss.*

**According to mayoclinic.com*

Bone Health

If you are a woman in your 20's or 30's, you probably aren't thinking about osteoporosis yet, but you should be.

Many studies have shown that lifting weights regularly can increase bone density. Other forms of exercises are not as significant when you are trying to keep your bones strong

and healthy.

The only true way to increase your bone density and strength is to lift heavy stuff and then put it back down. Be proactive now, so you don't have problems later.

Confidence

Walking into the gym knowing that you are going to crush a workout is such a confidence booster.

In the past, women were left in the corner with the pink dumbbells, or in a group fitness class jumping up and down on a small step aerobics box. They were often self conscious and felt out of place in the weight room. In today's gym atmosphere, I have often found that most women are much better at lifting weights than men. They work harder, push themselves to their limit and have better form.

When a woman realizes her outer strength, she can tap into her inner strength, and that begins to radiate. Confidence is a very attractive quality and that gym-confidence starts to leak into every other aspect of life. A strong lady in the weight room = a confident lady outside of the gym.





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Being Strong Makes Everything Easier

I can't stand it when a man or anyone else thinks that a woman is not strong and can't carry in the groceries, move furniture, or carry heavy stuff.

I am a big believer that women are independent and can do things themselves, especially when they lift weights and are strong. They don't need a guy to do everything for them. If you need to move something heavy, don't call the neighbor guy, or wait for your husband or boyfriend to come home. If you are lifting weights on a regular basis, you can do it yourself!

Creating independence for yourself is an amazing thing. It always feels great when you accomplish a task that you thought you never could do. Lift some weights, get stronger, and get things done on your own.

The "Getting Bulky" Thing: Debunked

The majority of women simply do not have the level of testosterone necessary to support a bulky physique.

Any woman that does have a massively muscular physique is probably supplementing with hormones. There are, of course, exceptions.

If it was that easy to gain muscle, no bodybuilder would complain about how they are not gaining muscle, every guy into weightlifting would be huge, and defensive backs in football would get so huge they would turn into linebackers. The bottom line is that even men with decent testosterone levels and above average genetics can not build muscle that easily.

Women often start out worried that they will get too bulky if they lift weights 2-4 days per week. They quickly find out that eating too much will make them look bulky. We don't train women to make them look too muscular.

At State of Fitness, we focus on full-body free weight training (squats, deadlifts, lunges, push-ups, pull-ups, rows and presses), kettlebells swings, Turkish get-ups, loaded carries and metabolic conditioning finishers. We use a combination of compound, full-body movements, as often as possible, to increase lean mass and decrease body fat.

What You Put In Your Body Counts

We know that in order for all of this training to be effective, you have to get your diet in order.

This is something that we all can agree on. I have found that the best way to do this is to reduce nutritional deficiencies, balance your macronutrients for your body type, pay attention to workout nutrition, increase food quality and don't worry about meal frequency.



Eat high-quality animal protein and lots of cruciferous vegetables, lots of healthy fats (avocados, extra virgin coconut oil, nuts) whenever your body needs it. Don't eat when you are not hungry. Drink a ton of water and minimal caloric beverages, chug a post workout shake or Branched Chain Amino Acids (BCAAs) before and after your workout.

Don't marry yourself to one method of eating (Paleo, low-carb, vegan, etc.). It will just limit your ability to choose foods and cause frustration. Just combine them, since they all work when used properly.

It's Time to Lift, Ladies

Lifting weights is the most beneficial form of exercise for all women to include in their workout program.

Cardio, Pilates, yoga, and step-aerobics all have their place in the world of women's fitness. I am a firm believer in enjoying what you choose to do for exercise, but there comes a time when you need to do what's best for your long-term health and fitness.

Women need to build muscle, women need to get stronger and women need to increase bone density. The data from studies proves that and the best way to achieve these goals is to throw around some heavy weights.

Put away the aerobics steps and pink dumbbells for another time and pick-up some heavy stuff and put it over your head, ladies. Your body will thank you.

Let's Get a Sweat On

Now that you have an understanding of why lifting weights is so important, let's take a look at a 3-day a week program for someone looking to start a solid strength training program.

There won't be 3-pound pink dumbbells and endless hours on the elliptical. This is a true weight-training program that gets the job done, ladies.

Make sure to perform a proper dynamic warm-up that includes foam rolling, dynamic mobility, core work, medicine ball throws and plyometrics. This should be brief, yet effective and only last 10-15 minutes.

Check out our blog at mystateoffitness.com for some great examples of dynamic warm-ups to throw in before you tackle your workout.

Read on to get started with a 3-day workout program.



Photo from Pixabay





The Workout Program

Perform all of these workouts in a circuit for 3-5 rounds. Rest as little as possible.

Workout 1

Goblet squats: 8 reps
Push-ups: 8 reps
Kettlebell Swings: 15-20 reps
1-Arm dumbbell row: 8 reps each side

Finisher

Perform a Farmers Walk for 3-5 minutes straight. Put the weights down as minimal as possible. Pick a weight that you can carry for 50 meters.

Workout 3

Inverted Row (TRX Row): 10-12 reps
Walking Lunges: 8 reps each leg
Dumbbell Chest Press: 10-12 reps
Single Leg Deadlift: 8 reps

Finisher

Perform your favorite cardio exercise as hard as you can for 10 minutes. You can break it up into intervals if you need to.

Workout 2

Deadlifts: 3-5 reps
Assisted Chin-ups: 3-5 reps
Dumbbell Push Press: 3-5 reps
Sit-ups: 10-15 reps

Finisher

Burpees: Perform 8 rounds of 30 seconds on, and 30-seconds off. Try and match your previous round's rep number each round.

