

# Health and Fitness Benefits of Weight Training

From [Paul Rogers](#),

Your Guide to [Weight Training](#).

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## Get Fit, Lose Weight, Build a Great Body, Prevent Disease

The benefits that many of us derive from weight training are diverse and categorical, so I'm inclined to view them in two conveniently defined categories:

1. Wellness, self-esteem and mind-body fusion and:
2. Remediation and alleviation of injury or chronic health conditions

The distinction is that the first category is about preventing disease, staying physically and mentally fit, longevity, building good body image, doing sport, socializing and having fun; and the second category is more about treating diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, metabolic syndrome and quite a few more chronic disease states for which weight training has shown benefit.

When I've finished listing all the benefits of weight training I think you'll be surprised. I even surprised myself when I finally got them down on paper.

Just about all of the benefits on this list are supported by some scientific study by health of fitness professionals or decades of practical experience; or else are just plain obvious. Okay, here we go.

### Weight Training for Wellness and Mind-Body Fusion

Preventive health and the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle and body image are the core concepts in this category.

#### Bodybuilding, Shaping, Sculpting and Competing

Some people get such self esteem and confidence out of bodybuilding, shaping and toning, and powerlifting, including competition, that many of the other benefits are almost secondary for them. It becomes a way of life and a satisfying one at that.

#### [Weight Management](#)

You know about this one. Exercise of 30-60 minutes each day helps to keep weight in check, especially if combined with a healthy, energy-neutral diet. Weight training is an essential part of the mix, enhancing muscle strength, tone and bulk and contributing to an efficient metabolism.

#### Strength and Balance

As you gain strength, joints and muscles work more efficiently together to increase your functionality all round including balance, flexibility, stamina and injury prevention. Weight training is heralding a revolution in the maintenance of functionality into older age. The muscle mass decline and the unsteadiness that goes with ageing may not be as inevitable as once thought.

#### Bone Strength and Density

Did you know that losing weight by calorie restriction alone can produce a decline in bone mass and density? Weight training is the ideal companion for any weight loss program because it helps maintain bone density while you're dropping those kilos. Muscle building and impact exercise strengthens bone by muscle and tendons impacting on the bone at the attachment points and producing growth stimulation.

**Boost Wellness, Immunity and Sleep** It sounds like a tough call doesn't it? To do all these things with weight training, but let's look at it. Regular exercise tends to improve sleep patterns; that's no revelation. Moderate exercise and good sleep both enhance immune function. Put it all together with weight training and you'll do well.

"Wellness" is a catch-phrase for good health and being fit, energetic and resistant to disease. Regular, progressive weight training as part of an exercise ethic can improve your self-esteem, confidence and may help to prevent or even remedy depression.

# Benefits of Weight Training for Chronic Health Conditions

## Beat Heart Disease, Diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome with Weights

### Weight Training for Chronic Health Conditions

If you're unfortunate enough to have a chronic disease, that is, a persistent, longer-term disease, weight training can probably help. In recent years progressive resistance training or PRT has been used in a wide range of disease settings in order to assist with day to day function or even to achieve more permanent improvement.

#### Cardiovascular Disease

Weight training is increasingly approved in cardiac rehabilitation programs, usually to complement aerobic training. With appropriate supervision and programming it has been shown to be safe and effective in building strength and mobility and the capacity to complete a wider recovery training program. Cardiovascular disease includes heart attacks, stroke, artery disease and heart failure.

#### Metabolic Syndrome

Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of symptoms which can include excess weight, high blood pressure (hypertension), glucose intolerance and high cholesterol.

Both aerobic training and resistance training provide benefits. High-intensity weight training is ill-advised for those with uncontrolled hypertension.

#### Diabetes

In a randomized trial, high-intensity progressive resistance training in type 2 diabetics improved glucose control, increased lean body mass, reduced systolic blood pressure, reduced fat mass, reduced glycated hemoglobin A1c and allowed a reduction in medication compared to a non-exercise control group. (Castaneda 2002)

Weight training programs are increasingly being recommended in diabetes management.

#### Cancer

Strength training has been employed with success with cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, for breast cancer patients post-surgery, and has been shown to prevent and even reverse the adverse effects of testosterone suppression chemotherapy in men with [prostate cancer](#). Benefits in all situations included lean mass maintenance, strength and fitness enhancement.

#### Depression

In one randomized trial, high-intensity progressive weight training was found to be more effective than low-intensity weight training or medical care for the treatment of older depressed patients. (Singh 2005)

Additional studies of resistance training for depression have produced positive results, perhaps in relation to sleep and mood enhancement.

#### Osteoporosis

Evaluation of the effects of exercise on bone quality suggest variable results according to age, hormonal status, nutrition and exercise type. However, in a review, a Tufts University group stated that: "Both aerobic and resistance training exercise can provide weight-bearing stimulus to bone, yet research indicates that resistance training may have a more profound site specific effect than aerobic exercise." (Layne 1999)

#### Lung Function and Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation from, or management of deficiencies in lung function such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) usually involve aerobic exercise such as walking. In recent years however, strength training has also been trialled with some success. It seems that strength and perhaps stability improvements provide the functionality to increase exercise capacity and tolerance, resulting in better performance all round.

#### Parkinson's disease

A ground-breaking study found that high-force eccentric resistance training produced improved mobility in Parkinson's disease patients compared to conventional care. Eccentric training targets the return movement of joint action -- a straightening leg under weight emphasizing the quadriceps muscle of the thigh for example. (Dibble 2006)

#### HIV/AIDS

Weight training has been shown to be safe and provide benefits within a general fitness program for sufferers of HIV/AIDS.

### **Arthritis and Fibromyalgia**

Both osteoarthritis and autoimmune rheumatoid arthritis responded to strength training with measurable benefit in carefully constructed programs of progressive resistance training. The belief that joint inflammation, pain and inflexibility as a result of arthritis are best treated with rest and little movement stress seems to have gone right out the door as the exercise modalities prove their worth in maintaining and perhaps restoring function. Optimum programs are still to be established.

Fibromyalgia patients have responded positively to resistance training.

The list above is probably not comprehensive : new applications of weight training for health conditions emerge regularly. I'll keep you updated.

### **Sources**

Singh NA, Clements KM, Fiatarone MA. A randomized controlled trial of the effect of exercise on sleep. *Sleep*. 1997 Feb;20(2):95-101.