



# A Step Above

## Personal Training Concepts

Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength..

~ Betty Friedan

### WHO SAYS I CAN'T BE A BODYBUILDER AFTER THE AGE OF 50!

*Jinjer's thoughts .*



*This article uses the term "bodybuilding" as an exercise routine or program. I am not referring to becoming professional bodybuilder for competition. However, that is not impossible for someone over fifty.*

Life is a precious gift and most of us want to live each day to the fullest. Aging is inevitable, but it has an undeservedly formidable reputation. No man can push back or stop the clock of time, but most can slow its tick and enjoy life as they age with grace and vigor. Jonathan Swift was right when he said, "Every man desires to live long, but no man would be old." Thus the quality of life in our later years is increasingly important. However, there is no reason to consider yourself

done with living a full, vibrant life just because you've reached the age of 50 or older. The benefits of bodybuilding after the age of 50 are phenomenal -- especially for those who have managed to continue to exercise most of their adult life. As our bodies grow older, the risks of age-related illnesses (heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, etc.) increase steadily. Therefore, it's doubly important that mature adults continue, or begin, a healthy lifestyle in order to live a long and healthy life. Think about the term "bodybuilding" just by itself. As you ponder on it, realize that you are **re**-building your body -- building it back up after years of "wear and tare" or, as some would say, abuse to your body. Take years of abuse plus age and we have some chronic restless aches and pains (YA+A=CRAP) -- no pun intended. But with age and exercising, I am sure we all feel the "yaa-crap!" on some mornings. How do you get started in a bodybuilding program?

As with any new "activity" or fitness routine, you should always consult your family physician prior to starting -- especially if you're over fifty, even if you think you're healthy. I know, you hear this all the time but it's better to be on the side of caution before going forward with any exercise or bodybuilding program. If you have no experience with any type of

resistance training, it might also be wise to do some research or talk to a certified personal trainer for guidance and expert advice. He or she can give you advice on how many times a week to do your bodybuilding and on what kinds of warm-up and cool-down activities you should do before and after to avoid soreness or injury.

We often find ourselves reflecting on the past, remembering what we USED to do in our twenties. Be that as it may, do not start your training program like you were a twenty year old ... thirty years later. Understand that your body has started to break down physically and cannot be subjected to that kind of stress like in the "younger years." Then take into consideration that several general changes have taken place in the human body as it ages: hearing and vision decline, muscle strength lessens, soft tissues such as skin and blood vessels become less flexible, and there is an overall decline in body tone. As a matter of fact, research states that as we age we lose 4 to 6 pounds of muscle tissue per decade.

Some great benefits of rebuilding our body are: (1) It can make us look younger due to the toning and muscle definition that takes place after bodybuilding regularly. You will notice new and improved, learner muscle mass.

## BODYBUILDER AFTER THE AGE OF 50 *(continued)*

(2) The American Council on Exercise has reported on one study that showed that by increasing muscular strength, stiffness in the major artery from the heart (aorta) is reduced which in turn can possibly reduce the risk of death from heart attacks. (3) Weight-bearing activities (walking, jogging, running, weight lifting, etc.) are all beneficial for increasing bone mass. Exercising regularly can lower blood pressure and cholesterol, decrease sugar levels and increase the total quality of life. Furthermore, it's crucial to understand the importance of eating more whole foods versus processed foods. Bottom-line, it's important to grasp that as we age, that we manage to meet our body's energy requirements during exercise. We win half the battle once we understand that working out most every day of the week at different training intensities and doing different exercises is a discipline within itself. Socrates (469 to 399 BC) said *"Thou shouldst eat to live; not live to eat."* Our bodies benefit when we learn to eat smaller portions more frequently throughout the day and do not skip meals or eat late at night. Check with your doctor to learn about vitamins and minerals and the roles they play for those over the age of 50 -- especially females experiencing the onset of menopause. Once we realize this, we will notice that when we first start changing the way we think about things, our behavior and habits will also change.

Can bodybuilding help with osteoporosis and arthritis? Remember that as you increase leaner muscle mass, you decrease bone loss and therefore maintain the strength to support those muscles. Weight training keeps our tendons and ligaments healthy and strong. It can reduce the symptoms of arthritis as strong muscles help to support and protect the joints. Research has shown that resistance exercises may also help manage pain and

reduce swelling of the joints. Weight training keeps the muscles around the affected joints strong and lubricated by the joint synovial fluid.

In order to increase leaner muscle mass and decrease overall body fat, I like to teach my clients the importance of cardiovascular exercise (aerobic) and resistance training (anaerobic) using weight machines and free weights or body resistance. Core strength is of the utmost importance to maintaining a strong back. Thus, I find teaching people how to engage their core muscles for balance and postural support is the most difficult thing for them to learn -- especially if they are over the age of 50 and have not exercised before. Finally, after learning proper skill acquisition and/or transition of movement while engaging core muscles and learning to breathe correctly when lifting weights or using body resistance, they might entertain the idea of moving more into a fitness or bodybuilding routine.

Here are a few suggestions that might help get you started: (1) First, make sure you warm up properly -- this will increase blood flow to the muscles. A good 10 to 20 minutes of cardio activity is recommended prior to a weight-training day for anyone over the age of 50. This also helps to prepare your mind and body so that you can focus more on what you are doing. It may even reduce the risk of injury. Start out lifting a lower weight that is manageable (low and slow), feeling good about your training form and using the proper core muscles and stabilizers. Then on the next set, safely add two or five pounds, completing anywhere from between 10 to 12 repetitions per set. (2) Perform fewer exercises per muscle group instead of wasting energy and time trying to do a lot in one session. Focus on the major muscle groups, completing about three sets per muscle group. You can

increase your training intensity over a shorter period and still get a beneficial workout. (3) Perform fewer workouts. With most workouts, individuals like to try to increase the intensity of work done compared to their previous workouts. This is a great idea, but it really depends on what your program requires. For example, if I am just starting out, and doing a full-body circuit training, it takes about an hour if trying to do 2 or 3 sets per muscle group. It is hard to get strength gains or increase leaner muscle mass when we don't focus on the muscles separately, doing them on different days.

Let's look at this differently. You can design a program that best fits your needs. If you are crunched for time, it may be best to do a full-body workout. You have a **FULL**-body workout or a **HALF**-body workout on different days (upper or lower), or you can do a muscle group workout and extend it over three non-consecutive days (chest, back, legs, arms, shoulders, abs). Do what is best for you. I train most my clients on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, focusing on two primary muscle groups and abdominal workouts for each of those days. Each day we exercise different muscle groups so that after about two weeks, we can try to increase training intensities to create an overload or stress on the muscle in order to build it. Remember, if you lift the same amount of weight **ALL** the time and don't change your program to incorporate different types of exercises that target the same groups, you will not notice a significant difference in leaner muscle mass. You will stay at the same place feeling like you can't accomplish a difference.

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