



# A Step Above

## Personal Training Concepts

Time and health are two precious assets that we don't recognize and appreciate until they have been depleted.  
**- Denis Waitley**



*Jinjer's Thoughts:*

### The Importance of Weight Training for Women



*Disclaimer: This article is intended for those who want to increase their lean muscle mass and engage in strength training overall. This is NOT intended for individuals who want to do competitive body building. The article will discuss general weight lifting techniques and guidelines for the person who already works out and needs fitness challenge. Nutrition and dietary requirements are beyond the scope of this article and will be discussed at a later date. This article will focus on training safely and increasing one's strength and muscle mass in a natural and safe manner.*

Jim McNeil, full-time writer and editor for more than three decades who has covered everything from cops and courts to business and the world of sports, states that "there are few subjects more riddled with myths and falsehoods than the topic of weight lifting for women." The common misconception that weight lifting causes a female to become big, bulky or muscle-bound discourages many females from taking advantage of the benefits of regular weight training--they are scared of the activity in general. This perception comes from those "chemically-altered "grocery stand models" on the covers of bodybuilding magazines who are likely pumped full of some "extra juice" (steroids).

OK ladies, here is your answer -- testosterone. Yes, testosterone. While weight lifting will help you build muscle, women simply don't have enough testosterone, a key hormone for building muscle, to become muscle-bound and appear masculine. Women produce about

15 to 20 times less testosterone than men. Since the testosterone is not present in sufficient amounts, the muscle will develop, but it won't gain a large amount of mass. Research states that adding one to two pounds of muscle, with an equal weight loss from fat, actually gives one the appearance of being smaller even though bodyweight remains unchanged.

Weight lifting could be one of the most important things women can ever do for their health and fitness. The benefits of weight lifting, aside from cardiovascular training, are numerous, with just a few of them being decreased body fat percentage, increased muscle definition and tone, enhanced energy, decreased risk of some serious conditions, and enhanced confidence.

Lifting weights can help women build a toned, sculpted, feminine body, plus help build stronger bones. It can boost your metabolism, making you not only look great but feel great, too. Any time muscle tissue grows, it allows a person to

burn more calories effectively throughout the day. Even at rest, the leaner the muscle mass the more calories a person will burn. For example, studies have shown that one pound of muscle burns about 20-30 calories a day compared to one pound of fat which burns approximately five calories a day. Other benefits to weight lifting include increased insulin sensitivity, range of motion, and athletic performance, in addition to improved function and overall quality of life.

Ok, all this sounds good. **But how do I know I am lifting enough weight to make a difference?** Ladies in general are more intimidated lifting free weights (resistance that has no attachment to a machine, dumb bells, bar bells, kettle bells, medicine balls) verses using machines. Both are very beneficial. I had a client tell me that it was very intimidating when she visited the local gyms and wellness centers. She commented that there were mostly men

### *Weight Training for Women (continued)*

in the weight lifting area, grunting and groaning when lifting heavy weights. She referred to that part of the gym as the "Testosterone Zone" and avoided it at all cost.

Other reasons untrained females might avoid weight lifting is it sometimes feels weird and confusing trying to figure out if the weight is too heavy or not in order to make a difference. Sometimes this prevents them from lifting for fear of injury and pain. *Warning: Before doing any type of weight lifting be sure to reference a good source for proper lifting and breathing techniques (hire a certified personal trainer to teach you, read health magazines or research your interest online that is accredited), as you can cause yourself serious damage with improper lifting.* It's true that women should avoid lifting overly heavy weights. On the other hand, just sticking to 2-, 3-, or 5-pound dumbbells with certain exercises will not do the trick for gaining strength and increasing muscle mass.

**How do I know what program to use for gaining muscle and building strength?** You need to get good training advice, set short- and long-term goals; and, most importantly, make a commitment and learn good time-management skills. View your training time as an investment -- think of it as getting paid to work out. The payoff comes with having an increased self-esteem and self-confidence, in addition to an overall better quality of life. Keep in mind that diligent training will yield results for improved muscle tone, strength and endurance. It doesn't happen overnight. Use the right tools and proper training techniques, illustrating good form with each lift.

### **Strength Training Pointers**

- Assess your personal goals (tone up, lose weight, build muscle, burn fat).
- Consider your training intensity, how hard you work through joint range of motion. Are you using a slow or moderate lifting speed with each rep? However, you should not use perpetual motion (swinging the body), for example when doing standing bicep curls.
- Make sure the weight is heavy enough to make a difference. "Is the weight heavy enough to complete 6-8 or 10-12 reps each time?" or "Is the lift too easy

in the beginning?" If reps were completed easily, then weight needs to be heavier to maintain stress on the muscle and joint in order to build muscle. **Overload principle** states "to enhance muscular performance, the body must exercise at a level beyond that at which is normally stressed. One can manipulate this by changing the exercise intensity, duration, or frequency." (NCSF) In general, working at 70-85% of one's "1 repetition max" (1RM) (*I will discuss at a later time*) is a good intensity for lifting weight.

- For leaner muscle mass and increased strength, think about picking 8-12 exercises doing 3 to 4 sets per exercise. This will depend on your goals and type of program you are doing. For example, three different chest, leg, and ab exercises repeated 4 times, increasing resistance each time. Day two, pick different muscle groups; for example, shoulders and biceps.
- The repetitions of a lift within a set will vary on the program being used. Endurance training might require high reps using light to moderate weight (15 or 20 reps). Strength training demands heavier weight with fewer reps per set (6 or 8 times, or 10 -12 reps).
- **What training methods do I use?** There are several different methods, such as: **Pyramid sets** increase weight with each set; **drop sets** start heavier, decreasing weight with each set; and **supersets** refer to either working the same muscle groups or working two opposing muscle groups back to back with no rest in between (for example, a bench press followed by push ups).
- Rest intervals vary. I have a rule of thumb that works great. When a client is working at a 50-70% 1RM, use either zero to 30 seconds between sets. As 1RM increases, increase their rest interval. Easier said: lighter weight, shorter rest interval; heavier weight (which is more demanding on the body; 70-85% 1RM), longer rest. Research has shown that sometimes resting too long inhibits anabolic hormones, which helps muscle grow in size. Shorter rest intervals, when combined with low blood pH, stimulate the hormone response.

- Never lift the same muscle groups within a 24-hour period, especially if you are lifting a heavier volume of weight in each of the muscle groups. Frequency of training for strength may be four to six times per week. Adequate time in the gym for building muscle is 30 to 50 minutes, depending on one's experience in training.

### **Heart Healthy Cheesecake with Raspberry Sauce**

www.vitamix.com

Yield: 12 servings

#### **Ingredients**

12.3 oz Extra Firm Tofu  
16 oz Cottage Cheese (1½ % milk fat)  
2/3 cup Sugar  
2 T Lemon Juice  
2 T Corn Starch  
Pinch of Salt  
4 Egg Whites  
3T Graham Crumbs



#### **Directions**

Preheat oven to 350°. Spray bottom and sides of a 9-inch spring form pan with non-stick spray. Combine tofu, cottage cheese, sugar, lemon juice, corn starch, salt and egg whites in the Vitamix Wet Blade container. Start on variable speed # 1, quickly increase the dial to speed # 10, then flip the switch up to High Speed for 1 minute. While the Vitamix is running, sprinkle the graham cracker crumbs evenly on the bottom of the pan. Slowly pour blended ingredients into the pan. Bake on the middle rack at 350° for 1 hour.

#### **Raspberry Sauce**

12 oz Raspberries, thawed or fresh  
1/4 cup Sugar (or other sweetener, to taste)

Add raspberries and sugar into Wet Blade container. Start on variable speed #1, quickly increase the dial to speed #10, then flip the switch to High Speed for 3 minutes. Serve warm or chilled.

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