



July 19, 2010 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Weight Training

A couple of weeks ago, I talked about a study that showed that if you walk or cycle regularly at a decent pace, it will prevent weight gain over 20 years. The good news: it's not just aerobic exercise that helps. In a recently published study, researchers followed previously sedentary women for six years after they began a weight-training program (1). Just like in the walking study, the women who completed the most training sessions prevented the weight gain that women in the control group experienced.

This was not an intense training program like you see advertised in infomercials; the women performed two sets of eight repetitions at 70% to 80% of their one-rep maximum. They did eight basic exercises for their upper and lower body. They also did some stretching and yoga. The women who were more consistent got better results. No glamour. No shouting. Just about 30 minutes of basic weight-training exercises. How simple is that?

If you're inspired to begin weight training, I encourage you to do two things. First, talk to your doctor and make sure you're fit enough to exercise; you're going to be stressing your heart as well as your muscles, and this is not a good way to find out—surprise!—you have heart disease. Second, invest the money for a consultation with a personal trainer; he or she will be able to assess your fitness level and guide you toward exercises that will build your body without breaking it. Nothing saps your enthusiasm for exercise like excessive muscle soreness—a little is good, but too much will stop you cold, and then you're making no progress at all.

Weight loss today is just as much about preventing weight gain as it is about losing weight. It's clear that while exercise isn't a great way to lose weight unless you reduce calorie intake, it's a great way to keep yourself from gaining weight. By the way, the average age of the participants at the beginning of the study was 56. Age is no excuse to avoid the weights. Get off it and get after it!

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

**Reference:** 1. MSSE. 2010; 42(7):1286-95.

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