

The surprising benefits of weight training

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(HealthDay)—The most common misconception about weight training is that it adds bulky muscle mass, a fear of some women. While elite male lifters can—and want to—get very developed, for most people the result

is simply well-toned muscles.

Other benefits are increased mobility, more support for your joints and the ability to stay self-sufficient into your late years.

As an added bonus, having more muscle can also help you with your [weight](#) goal. That's because the more muscle you have, the higher your [metabolic rate](#) and the more calories you burn. Add a calorie cut into the mix and you'll lose weight.

Muscle is denser than fat and it also takes up less room. That's why you can look leaner yet actually weigh more than someone without muscle definition.

To make the most of strength training, lift heavier weights than you think you're able to. Yes, challenge yourself, staying within safe limits. You don't want to try to lift a weight you can barely pick up off the weight rack, but most people underestimate the amount they can handle or fail to progress to heavier weights, according to the American Council on Exercise, and that limits the effectiveness of strength training.

Keep in mind, too, that you don't have to spend hours in the gym. All you need are 20 to 30 minutes every other day to accomplish training goals. Do one to three short sets—eight reps per set—with high weights and a mix of exercises that target all the major muscle groups.

If you're new to [strength training](#), get your doctor's OK first and work with a trainer on [proper form](#).

More information: The American Council on Exercise has more advice [on training to lose weight](#).

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