

Why should we add resistance exercise to our physical activity regime?

Also known as weight or strength training, resistance exercise requires a specific muscle or group of muscles to move against an opposing force, which can be done by using free weights, weight machines and our own body weight.

Occasionally, there is misconception that resistance exercise only helps to build our muscular physique and this may prevent some individuals from carrying it out, especially if the other benefits of resistance exercise are not understood. Because of this, we may think of cardiovascular exercises like walking, running and cycling as the primary methods for weight management. Whilst these are excellent modes of physical activity, resistance training can also have a huge beneficial effect in contributing to weight loss. Upon completion of a resistance-based workout, our bodies continue to burn calories throughout the day. This happens because resistance exercises can help to increase our resting metabolic rate – a crucial part of our body's efforts in burning energy. Research also shows that adding strength-based exercise on top of any existing physical activity within our lifestyles can help with weight management or weight loss.



As we get older, our muscles can start to decline both in mass and strength – a condition called Sarcopenia. However, evidence suggests that muscle strengthening activities can help to preserve our muscular strength, mass and power, all of which are important for bone, joint and muscle health as we age. Resistance exercise can help and prevent joint pain and conditions such as arthritis, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis. Studies have also found that weekly resistance exercise in older populations especially, can significantly help to reduce the likelihood of falls. Meaning that our balance, coordination and posture could also benefit. Resistance training can both improve and help maintain the ability to perform tasks of daily living. For example, getting in and out of bed and household chores are tasks requiring muscle utilisation, which further reiterates the value of this type of exercise.



So now we know some key benefits, how can we add resistance exercise to our current regime? Standing and sitting from a chair, wall push ups and climbing stairs are all great examples of exercises we can do from the comfort of our own home. Carrying shopping bags, using a substantially weighted object (e.g. books) or using resistance bands will help us to get an even better type of resistance-based workout.

It is important that we exercise according to our own ability, especially if we are beginners. For any health issues, be sure to ask either a Doctor or a Personal Trainer for exercises that may be best for you. For any gym goers, consulting with a fitness expert to draw up a bespoke strength training plan can also be effective.

So why not give it a go? Add resistance training to your current regime and start reaping the benefits!

Author:

Hi, my name is Roshni Mistry and I am a Health & Wellbeing Coach for the NHS Healthier You: Diabetes Prevention Programme. Throughout my life I have always been a sport enthusiast, and this led me to pursue a bachelor's degree in Sport & Exercise Science. My previous role was as a Gym Manager and I am also a qualified Fitness Instructor and a Sport Massage Therapist. I now have over 4 years of experience in this field, and I am extremely happy to be doing something I am truly passionate about – helping people to achieve healthier lifestyles.

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