Push it Right

How to get the most from your strength-training routine.

February 27, 2009 By Kat Noel

Most fitness experts agree that strength training is a vital part of a balanced exercise program.

Not only does pumping iron reshape your body, but it also transforms you into an efficient fuel-burning machine. “One of the major benefits of strength training is that you gain muscle mass, which increases your muscle endurance and bone density and raises your metabolism so that you burn more fat,” says Koya Webb, a Marina Del Rey, California-based holistic fitness trainer. “Three times a week is good, but I recommend doing something every day.”

To pump up the effectiveness of your strength-training workouts, Webb offers the following tips:

Eat and stretch. Your body needs fuel to keep it going. Eat a light meal an hour before working out. Stretch to increase flexibility and warm up your muscles.

Listen to your body. “If your body feels great and energetic, continue your workout. It’s your body’s way of saying, ‘Give me more; I can do more,’” Webb says. She recommends ending a training session if you’re extremely tired, in pain or feel any sort of discomfort. (Most workout injuries occur when you’re tired.)

Boost your protein intake. Protein helps our bodies develop and maintain muscle. Webb suggests eating a protein-based meal within 30 minutes of working out. “Right after you work out, your body wants to repair itself,” Webb explains. “If you eat within that time, your food replenishes your muscles so you’re not storing anything.”

Keep it up. “Once you start strength training, it’s a lifestyle,” Webb says. She encourages daily strength training so you won’t sacrifice precious muscle mass if you miss a day.

Put down the dumbbells. You can do these three moves at home, using your own body weight.

Chair Set: Sit upright in a chair, with your feet planted firmly on the ground. Place hands on hips and stand using only your leg muscles. Repeat for 3 sets of 10 reps. Works the hamstrings, glutes, thighs and quadriceps.

Squats: Stand with feet hip- or shoulder-width apart. Contract the abs and keep them tight as you bend the knees and slowly squat into a sitting position. Keep your knees behind your toes and hold the position; stand again. Repeat for 3 sets of 10 reps. Works the hamstrings, glutes, thighs and quadriceps.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/strength-training-excercise-16202-2361