

Strength Training 101



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A lot of women are intimidated by the free weights at the gym. It is actually a lot easier than it looks! You just need someone to tell you what to do and help put together a decent program that works well with your body.

MYTHBUSTED: YOU WILL NOT GET BULKY

Let's get this out of the way- no ladies, you won't get bulky or turn into the Hulk from lifting heavy weights. Women do not have the same kind of testosterone as men. But also this does NOT happen overnight. You don't wake up one day and are huge.

FREE WEIGHTS VS MACHINES

When you use free weights, you are moving the weights around you. When you use machine, you are moving your body around the weights. Machines do not adjust to your body but you conform to it. Also, machines does a lot of the stabilizing for you whereas when you use a free weight, you have to engage your stabilizing muscles to move the weights.

I recommend free weights over machines in general, but you can add machines to your free weight room for extra sets or just some variety. If you are going to choose machines vs not work out at all, then of course do machines.

TIPS FOR PUTTING TOGETHER A GOOD PROGRAM

1. Hit every muscle group every workout, instead of splitting by body parts. You are NOT a bodybuilder so don't try to be one. Frequency matters!
2. Lift heavy 2-3 times a week. And by heavy you should have a exertion level of 8 (10 meaning insanely hard) where towards the end you are grunting, sweating or making crazy faces. It shouldn't just "feel" hard but your brain should have some doubt if you can lift it even though your body knows it can.
3. Try to use compound lifts as much as possible: compound lifts are lifts that engage multiple muscle groups at once such as deadlifts, barbell squats, bench, and overhead press.
4. Do the larger muscle groups or compound lifts before isolation exercises. Bigger before smaller since those are the most taxing.
5. Track your weights so you can see if you are increasing every few weeks. If your performance are up, you are most likely building muscle.

SAMPLE PROGRAM

You will want to customize this for yourself or have a Personal Trainer guide you on what's best for your body. You can find any of these movements on YouTube.

Foundation phase for beginners who have never lifted before:

3 sets of 10-12 IN THIS ORDER:

Box Squats
Barbell Squats OR Deadlifts (rotate on different days)
Bench Press
Lat Pull Downs / Assisted Pull-Ups are better
Standing Shoulder Press
Hammer Curls
Tricep Overhead extension
Standing Calf Raises
Hanging or lying leg raises

REPS AND SETS

Your body will adapt to whatever you do so even though the sample program above is 3 sets of 10-12, that is just a foundation. After you notice you are plateauing, you should change up the reps and sets so new stimulus is hitting the body. I would suggest changing up the reps and sets every 3-4 weeks.

WHY AM I NOT SEEING RESULTS?

BE PATIENT!!!! The main problem with a lot of people is that they expect to see life changing results in weeks or months. Unless your diet is truly dialed in, no amount of lifting will help you out of a improper diet. Sleep, stress and diet all play a huge factor in your muscle growth. Also, if you've never lifted heavy before (and not group-exercise-class-type strength training- those are not even CLOSE to being heavy enough), keep in mind this is a lifestyle change and it takes you time to learn how your body responds and what kind of fuel (food) it needs to support that. NO ONE PERSON IS THE SAME and it takes TIME to experiment for what works best for you. A personal trainer will be able to guide you through the process and help you make the connection to get the results you want.

Reach out to me at HelenLinFitness@gmail.com for a free phone consultation.