

## Strength Training and Aging

A necessary ingredient for aging gracefully is adopting healthy lifestyle habits. I can't talk about healthy lifestyles without extolling the importance of a total conditioning exercise program. Such a program includes: cardio, strength, balance, and flexibility (stretching). Yet, most people only focus on cardio. Cardio (walking, jogging, running, swimming, biking, raking leaves, and other activities that get your heart pumping) is great. But, it's not enough to sustain you as you enter your 50s and beyond. It's imperative that you engage in the other three if you want to age gracefully and remain active.

Many women embrace cardio, balance and flexibility, but shy away from strength training. They equate strength training with lifting heavy weights or bulging muscles. I can't tell you the number of times I have heard a woman say, "I don't want to lift weights because I don't want bulging muscles." First of all, weight lifting is not the only way to train for strength. But if your fitness program does involve weights, it's highly unlikely that you will develop bulging muscles unless that's your goal. And, even then, it takes a lot more than lifting to a few weights to build huge muscles.

Many experts on the topic of aging consider strength training to be the real fountain of youth for successful anti-aging. Here are 5 reasons why.

- Increased mental and physical stamina. Strength training helps you to get stronger, leaner, and healthier. And, leads to increased mental and physical stamina so that you can better handle the stresses of everyday living.
- Strengthens your bones. Strength training strengthens your bones reducing your risk of developing osteoporosis. Stronger bones mean that you can enjoy daily activities with more confidence and ease.
- Prevents injury. Strength training strengthens muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones. And, the stronger we are, the lower our chance of injury. This is important as we grow older, especially for women.
- Slows down the aging process. Strength training is the only exercise proven to slow down the aging process. It prevents muscle loss that normally accompanies aging.
- Improves physical appearance. Strength training improves overall appearance and body composition. Take, for example, a 150 pound woman with 35% body fat. By beginning an effective strength training program, she reduces her body fat to 20%. Although her body weight remains the same, her strength, muscle tone, and metabolism improves, giving her a fit appearance.

Strength training is a vital component of any fitness program. In fact, it should be the foundation of your program. To exclude it means that you're leaving out a key element that will impact your health, fitness, and well being for decades to come.

Daisy Saunders is an author, lifestyle coach, and speaker on personal empowerment and healthy lifestyle issues. She is committed to empowering women and girls to be advocates for themselves. Her main focus is to add value to women who want to age gracefully. Visit her website at <http://www.daisysaunders.com> for free downloads of articles and resources on personal growth, wellness, and financial awareness, and to follow her weekly blog on aging gracefully.