



MACHINES VS. FREE WEIGHTS

What's better, free weights or machines? The easy answer is free weights because they are more functional, require more muscles, more coordination, and more balance. When an exercise requires more muscles, balance and coordination it also requires more calories and is more like real life. Keep in mind that the easy answer is not always the best answer. Machines have their merits as well, Machines are easy to set up, don't require much learning to do them without hurting yourself and usually have a diagram of the technique and highlight the muscles that will be used.

Cool, but which is better? The question is too vague to answer. It's like asking which is better trucks or SUV's? Well, they each have their advantages and good gas mileage isn't one of them. Because this is such an important but vague topic this article will be continued next month with everything you need to know about machine exercises. We will spend the majority of this month's article on the advantages and disadvantages of free weight and body weight exercises.

Free weights give you more bang for your buck, increased muscle building and toning because of the extra elements of balance, core strength and joint stability. But only if you do the exercises correctly, use the right loads, include every muscle group, and use a training schedule that allows for adequate recovery. That's the disclaimer. Without all of the above mentioned attributes, free weight exercises could do more harm than good. Here's why: I'll go through each of the must do's with free weights.

- **Correct exercise technique:**

1. Without this element you could place your joint in a compromising position, asking it to perform an unnatural movement under stress which could result in injury, that's an example of simple biomechanics. An understanding of basic biomechanics and exercise technique is essential to understand proper joint alignment during exercise and is not something you can learn from watching the guy or gal next to you. They may intentionally change the angle of an exercise to make it easier or not know how to do the exercise correctly..

Without good technique, you also run the risk of wasting your time. A classic example of this is doing dumbbell bicep curls and allowing the shoulder to flex during the contraction. Usually we do bicep curls to exercise the biceps muscles. A slight variation of proper form here and the majority of the work is being done by the front shoulder muscles (much stronger). This flaw is way too common, I believe it's because in an effort to see progress people use more weight than they can usually handle with their biceps. Therefore the body compensates by engaging the shoulder muscles to get the weight up. The result? Poor biceps development and potential shoulder overuse injury.

Using the right loads:

1. Using too much weight can kill your chances of achieving strength or muscle tone by not allowing you to reach an approximate rep number or causing you to use bad form to complete the reps, both of which can steer you in the opposite direction of your goals. Using too little weight can also be less than ideal. The reason being that the exerciser must do too many repetitions

to achieve enough muscle fatigue to produce the desired training effect. In other words the exercise isn't challenging enough and takes too long to complete for strength and toning goals.

Include Every Muscle Group:

Every muscle group should be included in the training schedule. That doesn't mean every day, but in equal proportion to the other muscles being trained, roughly the same amount of training per muscle group each week is a good rule of thumb for most. This is a common area where people can have challenges with free weights OR machines. I've had people tell me that they haven't done any abdominal or shoulder exercises for months, and they wonder why their backs and shoulders bother them.

Use a training schedule that allows for adequate recovery:

That means planning and considering the muscle groups to be trained, which days training should take place, and which days should be taken off of resistance training. This rule applies BOTH to machine and free weight exercises but is especially important with the higher workloads that usually come along with free weight training. Body weight exercises fall into the category of free weight exercises because the essentially involve a large free weight . . . you! Examples of body weight exercises are pushups, floor and hanging abdominal exercises, pull-ups, squats step-ups lunges and the like. The guidelines for free weight exercises all apply to body weight exercises.



EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGY TIPS

Exercise psychology is as important to physical exercise as any other factor in my view. It's truly the thing that separates most able bodied individuals from achieving the results they want. Why do some people set out and achieve fitness goals while others are unsuccessful? The answer is; because of the decisions they consistently make about exercise, nutrition, rest and hydration. It's those who consistently make healthy choices, exercise at the right intensity and know how to exercise effectively that get what they want in health and fitness. Mental skills are simple strategies that can be used to improve focus, exercise at higher intensities, and make healthier nutritional decisions. Exercise psychology is so important to fitness results, that I will be dedicating a portion of every newsletter to the topic. This month we will discuss some of the easiest ways to use psychology to improve performance in fitness and exercise. These exercises are some of the most powerful yet underused tools available. Let's see if you are willing to use them to your advantage.

Set Goals: It's the easiest exercise you can do. Hopefully the thought isn't making you sweat. Set your health and fitness goals for each month. We will discuss long range fitness goals, career fitness goals and medium range fitness goals in future months, mostly because it takes more work on your part. For now, let's focus on short term goals for exercise. To make this exercise as effective as possible you need to write down your goals on paper and commit to look at them everyday for one month. Start by writing down how many days per week you are going to exercise and what type of exercise you will do every on each day, i.e. weights, cardio, swimming, tennis etc. and how long you will do it. Then get a calendar out and record your result for each day with a star for every day you reached your fitness goal. Add up your stars for the whole month and evaluate your ability to commit to exercise. If you can meet your exercise goals 85% of the time for 3 months you are ready to set new goals.

Hire a Personal Trainer: If you have tried, and haven't achieved the result you wanted, hire a trainer. They can teach you how to make exercise the most effective and make sure you're following a complete program. Hint: if you haven't gotten the results you were trying for, something is not as effective as it could be. That's what personal trainers do. We find out how to get you the result you want by teaching you how to do it and making sure you do it by motivating and holding you accountable for the success you said you wanted. When you write down your goals there is a similar effect. You commit. And that's a big part of what it takes to get results.

FEBRUARY HEALTHY RECIPE

ARTICHOKE, GOAT CHEESE AND POTATO OMELET

INGREDIENTS:

1 small unpeeled Russet potato
1 teaspoon olive oil, divided
1/4 cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons finely chopped red bell pepper
4 drained canned artichoke hearts, coarsely chopped
1 teaspoon chopped fresh or 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon salt, divided
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
4 large egg whites
2 large eggs
1/4 cup (1 ounce) crumbled goat

PREPARATION:

Pierce potato with a fork, and arrange on paper towel in microwave oven. Microwave on HIGH 3 minutes or until done, turning potato after 1 1/2 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes. Peel and coarsely chop potato. Heat 1/2 teaspoon olive oil in a small nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion, bell pepper, and potato; sauté 3 minutes or until tender. Add artichoke; cook 2 minutes. Add oregano, 1/8 teaspoon salt, and 1/8 teaspoon black pepper. Remove from heat, and set aside. Combine egg whites, whole eggs, 1/8 teaspoon salt, and 1/8 teaspoon pepper in a small bowl; stir with a whisk. Heat a small nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1/4 teaspoon olive oil and half of egg mixture, and cook until edges begin to set (about 2 minutes). Lift edges of omelet with a spatula, tilting pan to allow uncooked egg mixture to come in contact with pan. Cook 2 minutes or until set. Spoon half of potato mixture onto half of omelet; sprinkle with half of crumbled goat cheese. Loosen omelet with spatula; fold in half. Cook 2 minutes. Repeat procedure with 1/4 teaspoon olive oil, egg mixture, and potato mixture.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION: CALORIES 264; FAT 10g (sat 4g, mono 4g, poly 1g); PROTEIN 20g; CHOLESTEROL 218mg; CALCIUM 71mg; SODIUM 512mg; FIBER 2g; IRON 3mg; CARBOHYDRATE 21g Source: *Health March 2005*

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