

Breaking Through a Weight Loss Plateau *Incorporating Strength Training Into Your Workout*

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You've taken action. The pounds are coming off; you are losing the inches and feeling good. You really have the momentum going, eating well and making conscious food choices. Exercise is part of your lifestyle and you are taking the stairs instead of the elevator, walking to lunch, sweating on the treadmill four times per week. You have even taken up kick boxing and yoga. You're doing all the right things and the flow is amazing. The realistic goals that you set are right around the corner. It's now just a matter of keeping focused and staying on track.

Then you hit a plateau. That last 10 lbs. just doesn't want to come off and you are wondering what your next move is going to be. You're a little frustrated. The scale hasn't budged in a while and you are beginning to wonder. Is there something missing? Could you be doing more? You're on a mission to find that missing link that will kick your metabolism up into high mode.

One very important thing to remember is that if you *are* committed to an active way of life that includes exercise, eating right and taking responsibility for your good health, you are most definitely doing the right thing. This commitment will always keep you on track. A healthy lifestyle is a *lifestyle*. It's not the "12 weeks to a new you" or the "30 day miracle plan." Temporary efforts yield temporary results. This is a process. Plateaus can happen. However, if you've established exercise and healthy food choices as an integral part of your life then all *realistic* goals can and will be attained.

The missing component in your fitness regimen is strength training. Lifting weights and doing resistance work is the key factor in promoting *fat* loss as well as *weight* loss. This is a sure fire way of truly changing your body composition (lowering your body fat percentage) and maintaining ultimate control of your weight for a lifetime. A comprehensive, full body weight training program will increase the amount of lean mass in your body which in turn will increase your metabolism, burning more fat as an energy source. As a result, you will burn more calories and more fat *all of the time*, even at rest. Each additional pound of muscle gained from weight training can amount to burning as much as 50 to 100 calories per day even during periods of inactivity. With weight training as a mainstay in your fitness program, all of your daily activities and especially your workouts will yield a much higher calorie burn, a much higher fat loss.

Approach your weight training program in terms of a full body workout. The only muscle fibers that respond to weight training are those that are stimulated. With this in mind, work all of the major body muscle groups: chest, shoulders, triceps, back, biceps, legs and core. Some muscle groups will respond better than others. This is due to many factors including genetic predisposition, muscle fiber type, and your overall strength and fitness level at any given time. However, if you stay consistent with your resistance training program, the results will amaze you.

So, for your next scheduled workout, call ahead and get an appointment with the manager for a tour of the weight room at your facility. *Ask the manager to recommend a trainer and get a few of your initial training appointments with that person. Safety is crucial and you want the very best instruction.* A qualified trainer will show you the correct form and the appropriate range of motion for a given exercise. As always, talk to your doctor before starting a resistance training program.

Here are some suggestions of some exercises to get you started:

Chest, Shoulders, Triceps

Back, Biceps (elbow flexors)

Lower Body

Seated Chest Press
Wall Push Ups

Seated Mid Row
Lat Pulldown

Leg Press
Squat

These are “multi-joint” exercises that incorporate several muscle groups in one exercise. Remember, you want to work all major muscle groups. By drawing your navel towards your spine and keeping in mind excellent posture during all of these exercises you will be activating your core stabilization mechanism as well. This really enhances the results from any exercise.

Begin by doing one to two sets of 10 to 12 repetitions for each exercise at a resistance level that is comfortable for you. To give adequate time for rest and recovery, work specific muscle groups on alternating days. For example, if you work legs on Monday then you’ll want to work them again no earlier than Wednesday. You can add or subtract exercises, sets, or repetitions per workout depending on your body’s reaction to the work. Like all activity, physiological response to weight lifting is very individual. Listen to your body and consult your trainer. If an exercise doesn’t “feel” right, it’s probably not. If you experience any pain at a joint during any part of your resistance workout, stop immediately and seek medical attention. Pain is your body’s method of communication.

Finally, keep the focus on your progress. Strength training will add an entirely new dimension to your weight loss program. You can and will move through this plateau and on to the next level of your fitness process!