

EXERCISE—Free Weights & Aerobic

Everyone knows that people should walk outside, hike, ride a bike, swim, or even use a treadmill--“aerobic” exercise. But, weight lifting or resistance training is the “recent” darling of the wellness world. Exercise is not just beneficial, it is essential! Biologically and historically, you can imagine early human beings exercising huge amounts living on the plains, in caves, enduring the seasonal hardships, and being very physical as we humans gathered our daily food, drinking water, firewood, or built our shelter just to survive. Much of that work was not only “aerobic” but also required weight lifting such as lifting stones or logs, carrying buckets of water, climbing trees as well as the aerobics of running, walking, and jumping. It is our human biology to be this way and do great amounts of both aerobic and resistance (weight lifting) exercise. Another way to look at it, at least for the past 20,000 years, is that we were sun-up to sun-down sod-busting farmers walking (aerobic exercise) behind a horse-pulled plow which we guided with our tensed (weight training) muscles. When we came across the many heavy stones in the field, we had to literally pick them up or roll them a significant distance—translates as more weight lifting or resistance training.

The biochemical aspects of aerobics and weight lifting (resistance training) are multiple including: improved immunity, avoidance of gall stones, osteoporosis, depression, anxiety, in coordination which predisposes to falls and fractures, heart disease, cancer, and enlarged prostate. Exercise makes us be physiologically better as a part of the whole picture of health to feel, be, and look our best. The ideal is to be “cut” (so our muscles are clearly visible under the skin - this is called “clear lines of definition/demarcation” = **CLOD/D**) due to developed muscles showing through our skin in combination with a low % body fat of about 11-22% for men and 11-27% for women.

To me walking outside, push ups, and sit ups are the best exercises you can do on your own. But people frequently think in terms of “machines” and “weights” and therefore I offer you the following guidance. Using the Nordic Track is probably the all-around best aerobic machine, but a bit noisy. Super smooth and quiet is the Aerobic Rider, but both my office manager and I developed carpal tunnel from that. We were the only 2 people I knew of who developed carpal tunnel using the Aerobic Rider. A treadmill is wonderful and has a high continued-use rate. My current recommendation is the Landice (brand) treadmill because it is neat, unbelievably quiet, and solid, although not inexpensive. It has a cushioned belt for joint and bone safety. The recent TV promotions that make some sense are P 90 X, INSANITY, and PACE programs or try the Denise Austin or other tapes.

How to get started with weight lifting? Most women usually begin with **3, 5, and 7** pound 1 hand (**Cap** brand because of the thicker more comfortable handles) dumbbells which are beveled **hexagonal** = (not the round type so that they don't roll when you set them down and then you end up putting them away because they become such a nuisance). Most men begin with 5, 10, & 15 pound (beveled hexagonal Cap brand) dumbbells. The goal for women is 5/10/15 pound weights and the goal for men is 10/15/20-25 pound one hand dumbbells. Women can use a 30 pound “Olympic bar” and men could use the 40 pound Olympic bar.

“Perfect form” is essential in resistance (weight) training or you may hurt yourself and you won’t develop the muscles you could. Have a personal trainer show you perfect form, buy a video tape, or read a good weight training book in order to avoid injury. Each exercise is done smoothly and slowly as either **1 set of “Super Slow”** exhausting 6-8 repetitions, each rep of which lasts 10 full seconds in extension and flexion--OR the more traditional **3 sets of 10 repetitions** (“reps”). In either case there are 5 recommended exercises: (1) Place your arms locked against, not “beside,” your chest = *the biceps*. (2) *Ears*: put the weight beside your ears and lift nearly straight up to the ceiling with the arms in full extension. (3) *Side to side*: keep your eyes straight ahead so you could read a note on the wall in front of you and bend only at the waist, going from one side to the other. (4) *Shoulders to toes*: lowering the weights to your toes keeping your eyes fixed on the back of your hands, bend at the knees if you have to, and then lift the weights straight up to your shoulder level with your elbows out to the side looking a bit like wings. (5) The *barrel*: point the toes and knees outward with your legs spread apart about 2 feet as if you were on a horse or barrel. Keep your eyes straight ahead lower the weights down behind your legs bending at the knees and then bring them up to your armpits. On Monday do the *biceps*, Tuesday the *ears*, Wednesday is *side to side*, Thursday is *shoulders to toes* and Friday is the *barrel*. If you choose to do the 3 sets of 10, start with the light weight, do 10, **rest 1 minute** and next move from your lightest weights to your **middle** weights. Then do the second set of 10 “reps” (repetitions). **Rest 1 minute**. Finally, move to the **heaviest** weights, do the same muscle group in the same fashion slowly and smoothly and you are through (10 with light weights-rest 1 min., 10 with the middle weight-rest 1 min., 10 with the heaviest weights-done).

You should exercise with weights only once or twice a week for each muscle group. As an alternative to the 5 listed exercises above: there are “2 or 3” parts to the body. “Uppers” (arms and chest) can be done on Mondays, “the back” can be done on Wednesdays, and “lowers” (below the waist) can be done on Fridays. Some people prefer to do weight lifting twice a week with back and uppers on Mondays, lowers on Thursdays. You need **3-5 days to recover** from your weight lifting. Some disagree with this approach/philosophy, but it is “just another” effective approach and it is what I recommend for you. You may need a trainer to teach you “perfect form.”