

Why women should do weights

Osteoporosis is a condition that makes bones more brittle and prone to fracture. Although osteoporosis can affect men and younger people, post-menopausal women are most at risk. One of the best ways to help maintain healthy bones is to exercise regularly – which encourages the bones to absorb calcium and other mineral salts that keep bones strong.

Weight bearing exercises and weight resisted exercises are best for strengthening bones and muscles and as well as helping to keep bones in good health. Weight bearing exercises are those where your body is supporting its own weight, such as walking or housework or carrying groceries. Weight resisted exercise involves pushing or pulling against an additional weight, like a dumbbell or barbell or resistance equipment in a gym.

The younger you start, the better

Anyone can benefit from weight training but it has been demonstrated that younger women who trained using weights have stronger bones later in life, this essentially means that you can bank bone when you're younger to help prevent fractures later in life – a kind of insurance scheme for your body. A life time of active living not only protects your bones but also keeps your heart healthy and may protect you from other diseases such as cancer and type two diabetes.

But starting at any age will help

Everyone can benefit from increasing their activity levels. Studies have shown that people who have already been diagnosed with osteoporosis can improve their bone health significantly through weight bearing exercising, the key is getting good advice on how to move well and how to self-manage.

Some more benefits

Strong muscles burn more calories, so if you need to control your bodyweight, lifting weights can help. It also helps with balance and can help you to regulate your sleep patterns.

'I don't want to look muscled'

It takes women a lot of heavy weight lifting, and sometimes the use of controlled substances like steroids and hormones, to achieve the physique of the heavily muscled power lifter. Women don't normally have enough testosterone in their bodies to develop bulging muscles, but can, with regular, moderate training achieve lean, toned and strong muscles.

'I hate gyms'

No problem. There are plenty of other exercises you can do that don't involve a visit to the gym. Dancing, yoga, tennis, Pilates, walking, running, gardening and even housework count – all you are aiming to do is increase your heart rate and make yourself feel a little warmer. You can do it in several short blocks of 15 minute or more but aim for at least a total of 150 minutes per week over at least 5 days per week for the best results. If you're unused to exercise, start slowly and build up to this target.

I don't know where to start

This is where your friendly local osteopath can help. They can screen you for any health concerns that might affect your ability to exercise, help to resolve any injuries or pain that might be holding you back and advise you on what exercises might suit your goals best. Many can teach you how to exercise correctly, avoiding injuries and how to gradually build up as your ability and fitness levels improve.

If you would like to make an appointment with one of our Osteopaths at The White Practice please call 01453 832515 or book online: www.thewhitepractice.co.uk.