Eight Tips for Starting a Weight-Training Regimen

There are many benefits to weight training for your overall health, but starting a routine can often result in failure if you push yourself too hard in the beginning.

Weight training doesn't to be focused on building bulk and getting "cut," and you don't need to spend hours upon hours at the gym six days a week. A more modest approach is equally beneficial and can improve your overall fitness, protect bone and muscle mass and help you burn more calories during the day and keep the fat off.

But one surefire way to sabotage your efforts in the gym as you get started is to be overambitious and lift too much weight. Starting slowly and gradually increasing weights is the best way to begin and вЂ" more importantly вЂ" stick with a weight-training program.

Below are some tips for how to start a successful weight-training routine without injuring yourself or burning yourself out.

Start small вЂ" At first, before lifting with weights, practice bodyweight exercises, such as doing push-ups or mimicking squats but without a bar and weights. This helps you learn the basic biomechanics of each routine.

Practicing with bodyweight movements allows you to fail and experiment in a safer setting. It's better to squat poorly using your own bodyweight than to have 100 pounds on your back while squatting poorly.

When you start with weights, don't lift too much at the outset. Instead, for whatever exercise you are tackling, start with a weight that you can lift 10 to 15 times with proper form (that means keeping your back straight and not swinging the weights).

Go easy the first two weeks by doing only one or two sets of 10 to 15 repetitions for each exercise. Then gradually progress to three sets or more. Rest about 60 seconds between sets.

In the beginning, you may only want to do one exercise per body part. For example:

- One or two sets of curls for your biceps,
- One or two sets of bench presses for your pectoral muscles, or
- One or two sets of military presses for your shoulders.

Warm up before each session вЂ" Before hitting the weights, get on a treadmill, stationary bike, rowing machine, elliptical trainer or stair machine for five to 10 minutes to get your blooding flowing and warm up your muscles.

Other options include jumping rope or jogging first вЂ" anything that will get your heart rate up.

Gradually increase the amount you lift вЂ" After you've been at it for a few weeks and you find the current amount of weight you are lifting is easy, you can start increasing the amount of weight by 5 or 10%. Remember to rest about a minute between each set.

Limit your workout to 45 minutes вЂ" For most beginners this amount of time is ideal for a weight-training session if you keep moving and rest only a minute between sets. If you work out longer than this, the benefits will only be slightly better and you may suffer muscle fatigue.

As you get more proficient and can lift more weight, you can consider increasing your time in the gym.

Be patient вЂ" Strength training requires consistent practice. Approach it with a growth mindset, appreciation of the journey and a commitment to consistently improve yourself.

Small weekly improvements lead to large results over the long haul.

Focus on compound exercises вЂ" If you are pressed for time and want to get the most out of your gym time, focus on exercise that works many muscle groups at once.

Compound exercises include squats, dead lifts, chin-ups and hip thrusts. These exercises differ from isolation exercises such as bicep curls, tricep kickbacks and the hip abductor machine, which work one muscle group only.

Focus on form and isometrics вЂ" One of the easiest ways to injure yourself is to use incorrect form or swing the weights because you can't lift them when using proper form, increasing your risk of injury.

Whatever exercise you're performing, you should feel that particular target muscle working. Also think of your joints as hinges and any part of your body that's not involved in the exercise should be stationary.

Avoid consecutive days вЂ" Rest a day or two in between workouts to give your muscles time to recover and replenish energy stores before your next workout. This is especially important during your first few weeks of a new training regimen.