

[IMAGE]

Weekly Training Prevents Weakness

As adults get older, preserving muscle strength is necessary to continue an active and independent lifestyle. Exercise helps maintain strength, especially in the elderly, who lose muscle continually as part of the aging process. However, the frequency of exercise necessary to preserve strength is unclear.

In a recent study appearing in the *Journal of Gerontology: Biological Sciences*, researchers required 10 elderly men to perform resistance exercises three times per week for 12 weeks. Next, the men were divided into two groups: half returned to a normal lifestyle free of resistance training, while the other half continued to train, but at a frequency of only once per week.

Men in both groups experienced strength gains of about 50% during the initial 12 weeks of training. Six months after this training session, the men who had continued to train only once per week managed to maintain essentially all their muscle size and strength. The men who returned to a normal lifestyle lost 11% of their strength, however, and their muscles were reduced almost to pre-study sizes.

Don't use this study as an excuse to only exercise one day per week. The point is, even if you can only perform a high-intensity workout once per week, it is far more effective than never working out if you want to maintain your strength and mobility. Ideally, seniors should perform mixed aerobic and resistance exercises several times per week to prevent injury and disease.

Reference:

Trappe S, Williamson D, Godard M. Maintenance of whole muscle strength and size following resistance training in older men. *Journal of Gerontology: Biological Sciences* 2002;57A(4), pp. B138-B143.

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