

[IMAGE]

Muscle Now = Muscle Later?

You're working hard at the gym every week, lifting weights and building muscle strength and endurance. In fact, you're absolutely thrilled with your appearance and the various health benefits your commitment to fitness is providing. But what will all this muscle do for you when you get older? It may help you grow old gracefully, according to a study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* that investigated the influence of muscle strength and endurance on later functional limitations.

Nearly 4,000 men and women (aged 30 to 82) received a strength evaluation between 1980 and 1989, then completed a mail-in survey in 1990. Strength parameters included one-repetition lifts using bench press and leg press machines, and a sit-up test (maximum repetitions in one minute). Functional limitations addressed in the followup survey included the ability to perform specific physical activities and the incidence of "new health problems" - heart attack, diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer or arthritis.

Results: At five-year followup, seven percent of men and 12 percent of women reported at least one functional limitation. Subjects with greater measured strength and endurance at baseline had a lower incidence of functional limitations compared with subjects with lower strength/endurance at baseline.

These findings emphasize the value of strength maintenance throughout life. The authors recommend that adults increase aerobic physical activity and activities that increase muscular strength.

Reference:

Brill PA, Macerel CA, Davis DR, et al. Muscular strength and physical function. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* 2000: Vol. 32, No. 2, pp412-16.

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