

Weight training in older people not only improves performance, it helps us live longer!

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Introduction

We've known for many years that endurance training prevents obesity, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes. Because of all these great health benefits, we've also known that aerobic exercise helps us live longer. However, while recent research has strongly suggested that weight training is critical for improving and maintaining performance in athletes both young and older, little is known about the effect of weight training on how long we live. A recent study has now conclusively shown that weight training into older age helps us live longer!

Research Methods

Data were analysed from the United States 1997–2001 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and linked to death certificate data in the National Death Index. The main item of interest from the health survey was whether the interviewees were doing strength training two or more times a week. The analyses were limited to adults aged 65 years and older.

Results

Only 9.6% of the 30,162 surveyed adults age 65 and older reported doing weight training with 31.6% of those people dying over the five-year survey period. These older adults who reported doing weights had a 46% lower odds of dying than those who did not do weight training. The association between weight training and death remained even after statistical adjustment for past medical history and health behaviours such as smoking, drinking and other physical activity.

Conclusions

Although only a minority of older US adults met weight training recommendations of doing strength training twice or more a week, the weight trainers were significantly less likely to die of any cause than those older people who did not do weight training. The message is clear. The older we get the more important it is to weight training. Not only to improve performance, but to live longer!

Source: Kraschnewski, J. and others (2016). Is strength training associated with mortality benefits? A 15 year cohort study of US older adults. Preventive Medicine, 87, 121-127.

Peter is an Associate Professor in exercise and sport science at CQUniversity. He has recently written the **definitive book for masters athletes** titled [The Masters Athlete](#) now in its second reprint and available in hardcopy or in pdf format with individual chapters also available in pdf at:

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