

Exercise Cuts the Fat, Keeps the Bone

They say beauty is only skin deep. Regular exercise creates benefits that go much deeper. In addition to making you look better on the outside, exercising causes significant changes on the inside, such as strengthening your bones and muscles. This is especially true among elderly people, who generally have less bone mass and muscle tone than the overall population. A recently published study, however, has found that routine exercise can help the elderly gain muscle and lose fat without any significant losses in bone mass.

In the study, 115 men and women ages 55 to 75 were asked to follow a series of government recommendations on exercise for 6 months, or to participate in a supervised program three times per week, performing a series of stretching, resistance training and aerobics. People in the supervised program showed improvements in upper body strength, lower body strength, lean mass, body weight, and total body fat, with no significant changes in bone mineral density in men. Those who showed the highest gains in fitness levels actually had an increase in bone mass. In women, there were slight decreases in bone mineral density, but these decreases were comparable to those seen in women who did not exercise.

As this study shows, not all of the benefits of exercise are apparent on the outside. Furthermore, it suggests a regular, moderately intense exercise program can be useful for people of all ages. To learn more about the benefits of exercise, specifically in the senior population, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/senior.

Stewart KJ, Bacher AC, Hees PS, et al. Exercise effects on bone mineral density. Relationships to changes in fitness and fatness. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, June 2005;28(5):453-460.



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