RESISTANCE TRAINING AND HEART HEALTH

Researchers have long noted the benefits of cardiovascular exercise on heart health. However, recent studies indicate resistance training exercises may prove to have similar benefits related to heart rate, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and glucose. While resistance training and cardiovascular exercise each offer health benefits on their own, the combination remains the preferred training method among fitness and healthcare professionals.

Adaptations to Resistance Training

Heart Rate – Immediately following a workout, a person's heart rate will be elevated. However, in terms of chronic adaptations, there appears to be a long term decrease in resting heart as a result of resistance training….especially during low resistance/high repetition training.

Blood Pressure – Although more research is necessary to understand the role of resistance training in lowering blood pressure, several studies have shown decreases in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure after engaging in a resistance training routine over an extended period of time…particularly in older adults.

Cholesterol/Lipids – In one study published in the Journal of Physical Activity, participants who took part in an 8-week resistance training program saw decreases in cholesterol and triglyceride levels. In the same study, participants who engaged in BOTH resistance training AND cardiovascular exercise also saw improvements in their HDL and LDL cholesterol levels.

Glucose – Initially, it was believed improvements in glucose levels were a result of decreases in body fat and increases in aerobic capacity (cardiovascular exercise). Interestingly enough though, research indicates resistance training can improve glucose tolerance and increase insulin sensitivity in a similar manner.