



## lifestyle

### Strength Training is for Everyone - Including Women



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Many people today are still unsure if strength training is right for them. The truth of the matter is, however, that research continuously demonstrates that strength training is both safe and effective for women and men of all ages. In fact, even people with conditions such as heart disease or arthritis will benefit from an exercise program that includes lifting weights a few times each week.

Often women can be reluctant to strength train as they are worried about their muscles becoming big and bulky as opposed to long and lean. This is why many women tend to stick to aerobic workouts. While women do produce testosterone, unlike men the quantity produced is not high enough to give bulging muscles. As testosterone is the hormone required for muscle building, weight training will not produce a masculine physique in women.

Strength training, particularly in conjunction with regular aerobic exercise, can also have a profound impact on many aspects of a person's life.

#### Benefits of Strength Training

There are endless benefits to strength training regularly no matter what your age, sex or health condition. Listed below is just a fraction of the benefits you can expect from participating in a regular weight training program.

- Healthy Bones
- Improved Posture

- Less Physical Injury
- Increased Metabolism
- Obesity Prevention
- Increases HDL ('good' cholesterol) and decreases LDL ('bad' cholesterol)
- Reduces risk of diabetes and insulin needs
- Lowers risk of cardiovascular disease
- Lowers high blood pressure
- Reduces symptoms of PMS
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Decreases colds and illness

Weight training is an important part of any exercise plan regardless of your goals. According to the American Heart Association, while aerobic activities help your heart and lungs and stretching improves your flexibility, weight training will improve your strength and endurance, and a combination of all three makes for an optimal exercise plan.

Scientific research has also shown that strength training can slow the physiological

aging clock. While aerobic exercise, such as walking, jogging, or swimming, has many excellent health benefits—it maintains the heart and lungs and increases cardiovascular fitness and endurance—it does not make your muscles strong. Strength training does. Studies have shown that lifting weights two or three times a week increases strength by building muscle mass and bone density.

There are however principals to follow when it comes to strength training so before hitting the gym make sure you have a qualified fitness professional teach you the tools you need in order to make your strength training workout safe, effective and specific to your goals.

If you'd like to set up an appointment to discuss training principals or have any questions or comments regarding this article please do not hesitate to email me at [micaelafitness@gmail.com](mailto:micaelafitness@gmail.com)



## The Scoop on Snow Shovelling

While many people recognize that shovelling snow is hard work, physiotherapists caution that shovelling can place severe stress on your heart, and cause stress and strain on your body. Research in the *Journal of Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation* has identified snow shovelling as a high-risk activity for cardiovascular events. Every year shovellers also sustain injuries such as pulled and strained muscles from repetitive twisting and improper lifting. However, Canadians can still enjoy cardiovascular benefits from snow shovelling if they prepare themselves and listen to their bodies.

Snow shovelling has a similar intensity to jogging, racquet sports, and other strenuous sporting activities. Individuals will be better prepared for shovelling if they avoid being sedentary by regularly participating in activities like walking.

Important tips for shovellers include warming up before shovelling, taking frequent breaks, and separating the job into smaller stages to prevent overexertion. Shovellers should take notice of any symptoms of back pain or repetitive strain, and should be aware of any warning signs of cardiac distress including shortness of breath, chest and/or upper body pain or discomfort, palpitations, and other symptoms such as anxiety, sudden extreme fatigue, nausea, dizziness or lightheadedness.

Shovelling can be made even more difficult by the weather. Cold air makes it harder to work and breathe, which adds extra strain on the body. Cold, tight muscles are more likely to strain than warm, relaxed muscles. Take time to stretch and prepare your body for activity with a simple warm-up before shovelling, and wear warm clothing.

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association offers the following tips to help you get a handle on safe shovelling:

### Choose a shovel that's right for you:

A shovel's handle is the appropriate length when you can slightly bend your knees, and hold the shovel comfortably in your hands at the start of the shovel stroke.

A bent-handled shovel can reduce bending compared to a traditional straight-handled shovel.

A shovel blade that is made of plastic will be lighter than a metal one, putting less strain on your spine.

A smaller blade may be better than a larger one because it avoids temptation to pick up a pile of snow that is too heavy for your body to carry.

### Use proper techniques:

Grip the shovel with your hands at least 12 inches apart, and keep one hand close to the base of the shovel. Positioning your hands further apart will help increase your leverage.

Squat with your legs hip-width apart, knees bent and back straight. Lift with your legs. Do not bend at the waist.

Scoop small amounts of snow into the shovel and walk to where you want to dump it. Holding a shovel of snow with your arms outstretched puts undue strain and compression on your spine.

Step in the direction in which you are throwing the snow. This will help prevent twisting of the low back and 'next-day back fatigue' experienced by many shovellers.

### Take care of your body:

If you have any doubts about your ability to shovel due to health concerns, injuries, or inactivity, consult a physiotherapist.

Clear heavy snow in two stages – by skimming snow from the top, then removing the bottom layer.

Take a short rest or decrease the intensity of effort slightly if you find yourself unable to say a long sentence in one breath.

Take frequent breaks when shovelling – stand up straight and walk around periodically to bring your spine back to a neutral position. You can also do standing extension exercises by placing your hands in the small of your back, bending slightly backwards, holding the position for several seconds, and repeating this movement 5 to 10 times.

If you are experiencing pain, consult a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists are primary health care professionals who help people of all ages and lifestyles gain and maintain their physical mobility. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists can work with you to increase your mobility, relieve pain, build strength, improve balance and increase cardiovascular function. Physiotherapists will also help you prevent the onset of pain or injury, allowing you to maintain your desired level of active living.

This excerpt is provided by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association. January 7, 2009. Visit the official website of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association for more health information, [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca).



## ***Annick-Isabelle Marcoux - From the other side of the world***

Does the name Annick-Isabelle Marcoux ring a bell? Have you already heard of her? Annick-Isabelle is the Regional Director, Business Development at BMO Harris Private Banking. This is one accomplished businesswoman who made headlines a few months ago. You perhaps also heard about a certain Annick-Isabelle Marcoux who is the Canadian Cycling Champion in the time-trial category and who recently participated in the UCI Track Cycling Masters World Championships in Australia and who took home a medal. A little closer to home at the club, you may know an Annick who teaches spinning on Wednesdays at noon. And yes, we are talking about the same person!

Annick is sponsored by the Mansfield Athletic Club and proudly wears our colours in her competitions, whether they be provincial, national or international.

We have included below two recently published articles to describe the path that Annick followed to reach the world championships and the adventure she experienced along the way.

### **She rolls on ahead**

Valérie Girard

Le Reflet, September 4, 2009

DELSON - Nothing and nobody will stop cyclist Annick-Isabelle Marcoux from reaching her most cherished dream, that is, to take part in the UCI Masters World Championships, the biggest cycling competition on the planet. She'll be there in one year, whatever the cost.

This Cadiac native seems to be on the right track of reaching the goal she set three years ago. Back in the cycling competition after a hiatus of several months, she promised herself she would compete in 2010.

She's been following her game plan ever since. Once again this summer, she racked up the trophies, winning both the Grand prix des Amériques in June, and the Canadian Road National Cycling Championships, in the Women's 30-39 category. This was the athlete's third victory in the Canadian Road National Cycling Championships, in the Women's 30-39 category, in which she had come in first in the time-trial last year, and in mountain biking in 2000.

In October, the cyclist travelled to Australia to take part in the Master World Games, the equivalent of the Olympics for the 30 and over category. "For the most part, it's all professional athletes who have had children and who are re-entering competition," she explains to shed light on the caliber of the event.

To be ready for this challenge, the 39-year-old woman is currently in Vermont to participate in her first professional competition of her career. "I want to practice among different types of racers, explains the can-doer. These girls are between 19 and 29 years old and cycling is their career. I manage personal wealth."

Cycling is pretty far from being Ms. Marcoux's only priority. In addition to having a full-time job, she is currently completing a higher-level business management program and devotes several hours a week to teaching spinning. In spite of everything, she gets on her bike or goes to the gym six times a week without fail. "On Saturday, it was 6:30 p.m. when I finished class. It was dark and

raining. I got on my bike and went to train. My husband followed behind me in the car, shining his headlights, so I could see the road better," said the athlete.

"Bike training is cumulative. If I skip a day, there's a major impact," she adds.

### **Sources of motivation**

If you think the discipline Annick-Isabelle Marcoux imposes on herself is impressive, she categorically refuses to be compared to a superwoman. She admits, however, to living her life with passion and to being a little powerhouse. "It's like having a bone between the teeth, biting it and never letting go," she illustrates.

She has many sources of motivation. In addition to being crazy about cycling competitions, "from the starting line to the finish line," she sees an obvious link between her sport and her work. She enjoys comparing training to launching a business. "It's my lab. I'll look for tricks to make myself into a better manager and a good leader. I'll

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## Annick-Isabelle Marcoux - From the other side of the world

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relate this at work on Monday," indicates the one who trains with Olympic cyclist Manon Jutras.

On a personal level, she also wishes to become a role model for both the young and the old. "I want to prove that it's possible to have grandiose dreams when it comes to sports while having grandiose dreams when it comes to one's career," she says.

### In control despite the pain

Valérie Girard

Le Reflet, November 6, 2009

DELSON - It's certainly not the injuries, as

significant as they are, that were going to slow down cyclist Annick-Isabelle Marcoux during the UCI World Masters Championships in Australia, from October 10 to 18.

Registered in three events, the 39-year-old woman "had a royal wipe-out" on her second day of the competition. The day before, on the strength of a silver medal at stake, she was preparing to participate in a time-trial, her discipline par excellence.

"I was at the height of my confidence," she recalls. I was in a world race and I came in 2nd. I said to myself that I had everything going for me to win. But I had a big stroke of bad luck."

When she was about to start, the wind picked up. Several competitors then changed their tires. The Candiac native had nothing but full tires. "When the wind picks up, there are no spokes, so it propels us ahead," she explains.

Aware of the risk that this would create, Ms. Marcoux nevertheless mounted her bike. What was bound to happen happened. "I fell onto the cement while I was riding at 60 km/h. I may have slid along 100 feet. I managed to rip open everything on my left side: hand, elbow, hip," she recounts.

While she was being taken to the hospital, the athlete had only one idea in her head: participating in the following day's race, a road circuit. Despite the pain, she wanted to be at the starting line. "In the hospital, I asked them not to close up my wounds so my hip could be flexible and so I would be able to pedal. They applied adhesive netting. They taped my hand in the form of a bicycle handle so I could change speeds. I said to myself: I didn't come all the way to Australia not to finish my races."

The next day, the driven athlete was on her bike. The pain kept her up all night. She was feverish, but was nevertheless ready to embark on a two-hour race. "I finished 5th," she says, half satisfied.

### Dream becomes reality

The reason why Ms. Marcoux shrugged off such pain in Australia, is because participating in the Master World Games, the equivalent of the Olympics for athletes 30 and over, meant so much to her. "What I carry away from this experience is that dreams can be achieved. Three years ago, I set the goal for myself of racing internationally, against girls from elsewhere, mentions the triple Canadian champion. A dream is not just for dreaming, for imagining. In life, you need to push yourself to achieve your dreams."

Annick still has plenty of projects in mind. So what is her ultimate goal? Taking part in the UCI Track Cycling Masters World Championships in 2010, the biggest cycling competition on the planet. "It's like the Ironman for triathletes," describes the athlete who hopes to compete in the next World Games in four years.



## Am I too old to start running?

**Q** - I'm thinking about starting to run in the next little while. I would like to receive some advice for a person my age. I'm 54 years old. I'm in relatively good physical shape: I can do 30 km of cycling, hiking, and I walk almost every day for 30 to 60 minutes. I have a healthy weight. My blood pressure is a little high, but I take medication for it it's well under control. My husband is 60 years old and also plans to run with me. He doesn't have any health problems per se, but is a little on the heavy side. Do you have any specific recommendations for us before we start? Thank you.

Louise Grégoire

**A** - It is never too late to start running. You first need to know why you want to run. You already seem active, in shape. The main goal is to be active, right? If you are motivated to run and you dream of running a race, you need to choose a goal that is both realistic and attainable within several months. For example, running 5 km.

Once you've set your goal, you need to plan your training accordingly. Since you already walk and you don't seem to have any running experience, you can start by inserting running intervals into your walking sessions. For example, you could walk for three minutes and run for one minute, and so on and so on. Progressively, you will be able to add a little more running until you can run without the walking intervals. At the same time, you will

see if running is an activity that you enjoy.

It's important to approach your goal progressively. You often hear people say, with a big smile, that they did such and such training and were unable to walk for three days. This is not the goal. That being said, it's normal to feel a certain muscular fatigue and mild aches while striving to improve your running. What you need to do is to allow yourself time to recover between two sessions, eat well, and take the time to stretch.

You have to be patient because short cuts are few and far between. Becoming a good long-distance runner doesn't happen over night. If you rush things, you'll only injure yourself and be forced to slow down or even stop. You'll have a bad experience and may even lose all desire to run again!

