

Safety Precautions and Basic Gym Safety

MIND BODY HEALTH CLUB

MARBLE HOTEL



This article's main purpose is to assure your safety, so that you get the most out of your workouts while avoiding injuries and/or other complications. It is imperative that you understand and adhere to each of the following safety precautions.

- 1.) Get a complete physical checkup before you start a strength-training program. You might have to modify or avoid weightlifting if you have muscle or joint problems, seizure disorders, heart disease, high blood pressure, previous injuries or any other physical condition with potential for danger.
- 2.) Be sure to always integrate warm-ups, stretching, and cooling-down into your program. This will reduce your risk of injury by increasing your blood flow and prepping your muscles for the work they are about to do. Using the proper lifting form is important not only to work your muscles correctly, but also to prevent injury. Always do your exercises through a full range of motion in a slow, controlled manner.
- 3.) When beginning a new weightlifting program--or any time you try a new exercise--always start out using light weights. It is far better to start out too light than too heavy. Choose a weight that you are sure is light and do a warm-up set of 15 repetitions, while perfecting the correct lifting technique. If the weight is too easy for 10 to 12 reps--in keeping with your goals--add a little more weight and gradually increase that weight within the next few weeks.
- 4.) Going to total muscle fatigue with a challenging weight is not useful objective in your first few weeks. When trying a new lift or starting a new routine, the objective is to practice and perfect your technique, and to learn how to concentrate on the muscle you are exercising.
- 5.) Proper breathing is essential in weightlifting. If you hold your breath while lifting a weight, you run the risk of raising your blood pressure and starving your brain of oxygen. You should try to exhale during the "positive," or main exertion phase, and inhale during the "negative," the phase in which you resist and come back slowly. If this becomes too confusing or takes away from your concentration on the lift, don't worry about it--just remember to breathe.
- 6.) Do not leave equipment lying around the weight room where someone could trip over it. Always use the collars that prevent weights from falling off the barbells. Be sure to keep your hands away from the chains, cams, pulleys, and weight plates of exercise machines when they are in use. Also, when selecting the weight for a machine exercise, be sure to push the pin in all the way. Be sure to wear a weightlifting belt on exercises that place stress on your lower back, such as bent-over lifts like squats, or barbell rows.
- 7.) Consider having a spotter. Having a spotter is important not only for safety reasons but also for performance enhancement. Few things work as well as a conscientious, knowledgeable spotter or workout partner who demands proper technique and full effort on every exercise set and repetition. An effective spotter gives encouragement, technique, feedback, and just enough assistance to permit completion of that final, difficult, repetition. No matter what your goal reps are, each set should end with the last repetition being challenging; you should try to go to muscle fatigue. Given this goal, there is always the chance that when trying for a final repetition, you just can't do it all on your own. This is where your spotter comes in--helping you just barely finish that last rep, and assuring you of your safety.
- 8.) If you do not have a workout partner at first, we strongly recommend trying to find someone with similar goals and interests to work out with you. This will not only help assure safety and motivation, it will also help you make it to the gym more often. If you aren't working with a partner at a gym, either ask a staff

member or someone who looks experienced for a quick "spot". Most people will be happy to help you. Be sure you and your spotter have a plan so that each of you knows exactly what the other will do in case you need assistance.

9.) It is also important that you know how to correctly spot someone to assure his or her safety. When spotting someone, always be prepared to give a little assistance when they reach muscle fatigue (cannot complete the rep on their own). You don't want to help so much that the rep becomes easy for them to complete--give just enough assistance so that they can complete the set, but it is still challenging for them. Also, only provide assistance on the positive phase (the part that requires the pushing or pulling motion). Still have your hands ready to help, but don't help with the negative phase (the part where you resist the weights force)--the lifter should try to slowly resist the force of the weight all on his/her own.

-When spotting someone, who is using a barbell, be sure to use two hands and provide assistance evenly on the bar so you don't throw off their balance or favor one side more than the other.

-When spotting someone, who is using a dumbbell, be sure to provide assistance in the same place for both hands and the same amount of assistance on each side.

-When spotting someone who is using a machine provide assistance underneath the weight--be sure to move hands on the negative phase (down phase with resistance) not only to promote effective results for the lifter but also to assure your safety.

Strength training provides many important benefits that cannot be achieved by any other exercise or activity. However, when enjoying this great form of exercise, be sure to adhere to these precautions so that your program is not only effective, but safe as well.

Good luck! We hope you enjoy all the wonderful benefits of a safe and effective strength training program.