

# Weight Lifting 101

Lifting weights tones and builds muscle and strengthens bones. But if you don't follow proper techniques it can be both ineffective and dangerous, causing injuries and preventing you from getting the greatest gains in muscle building, stamina, and strength. Follow these tips to get the most out of your workout while staying safe.

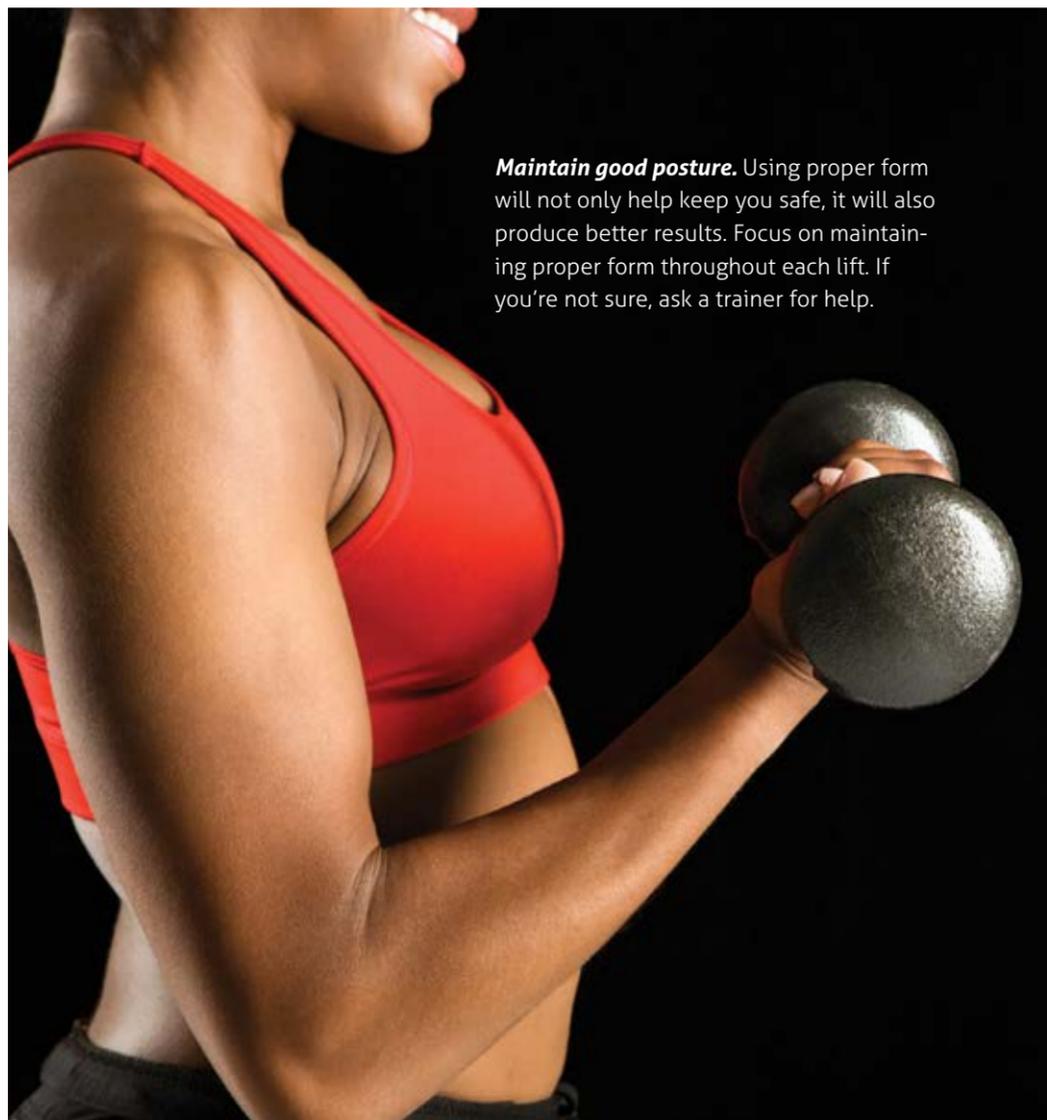
By Maria Oldham

**Wear the right gear.** Closed-toed tennis shoes with good traction will protect your feet if you drop a weight and keep you from slipping. Exercise gloves can protect your hands and allow for a better grip.

**Warm up and cool down.** A five to 10-minute warm up will help reduce your risk of injury by boosting blood flow and lubricating joints. Just as important, a cool down (stretching) afterwards will help your muscles recover more quickly.

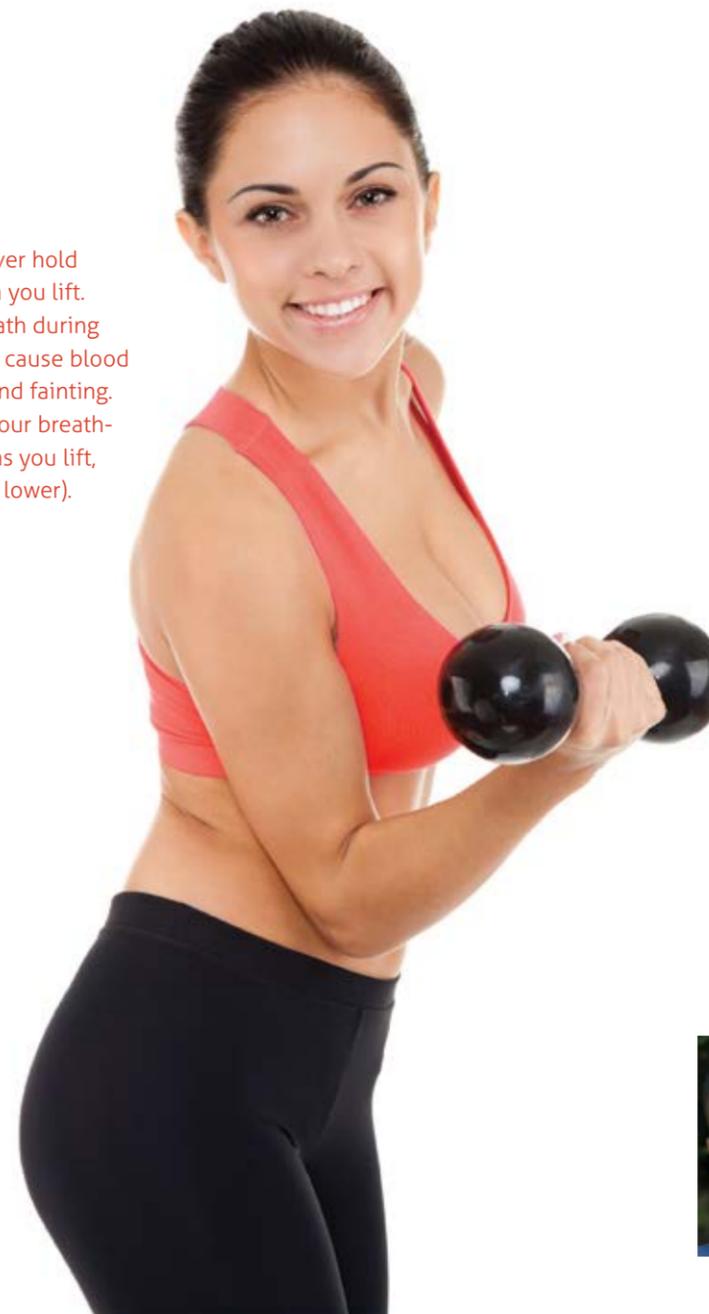
**Always have a spotter.** A spotter can watch your form to be sure you are lifting the weights correctly and can help if you have any problems.

**Start slow.** Start with a weight you can lift about 12-15 times comfortably. As your muscles strengthen, you can add more weight, but starting with too much can cause sprains, strains, and other damage to the body.



**Maintain good posture.** Using proper form will not only help keep you safe, it will also produce better results. Focus on maintaining proper form throughout each lift. If you're not sure, ask a trainer for help.

**Breathe easy.** Never hold your breath when you lift. Holding your breath during weight lifting can cause blood pressure spikes and fainting. Instead, control your breathing (breathe out as you lift, breathe in as you lower).



**Control the pace.** Maintain a comfortable pace throughout your session, controlling each movement. This will actually produce better results for your body.

**Stay loose.** Never lock your joints. Locking your joints puts them under an enormous amount of pressure, which can lead to serious injury.

**Listen to your body.** If a certain exercise is causing you pain, stop doing it for a few days. You can try it again later with less weight.

**Be consistent.** Set a routine and stick to it. Try working all the major muscles in your body two to three times a week or breaking your workout into upper and lower body routines.

## EXPERT ADVICE

### Benefits

“The benefits of weight training, especially for older adults and women, include preventing osteoporosis, maintaining muscle tone and strength, and keeping you able to do things you need to do on a daily basis like carrying groceries and taking things up steps. For younger people, it depends on what your goals are. If you're a young man looking to gain a little muscle mass, lifting a good amount of weight for 10-12 reps would be a good landmark to follow. Weight training essentially helps anyone

wanting to increase strength.”

**Tedovious Fletcher,**  
Fitness Instructor  
and Personal Trainer,  
The Sports Barn



**Take days off.** Strength training causes tiny tears in muscle tissue that are essential for building them up. As the tears heal, muscles become stronger, so it's important to give your body at least 48 hours to recover before your next session.