

## Start Strength Training For Daily Life

(NAPSA)—Many people perform strength training to look good, but it also can help you with the rigors of daily life—whether that is climbing stairs, lifting kids or playing a few sets of tennis.

Fitness experts now recommend functional strength training (FST) as another way to enhance coordination, muscular strength and endurance—and ultimately build a body better able to meet the challenges of daily living and even improve athletic performance.

Becoming increasingly popular in health clubs, FST is an integrated approach to strength training focused on exercising multiple muscles and joints together instead of working muscles in isolation as with conventional strength training.

Like yoga and Pilates, two popular stretching and strengthening programs, FST emphasizes the body's core muscles—abdomen and back—as stabilizers. The core plays an important role in nearly every activity we do.

FST uses free weights such as dumbbells and barbells, pulley weight machines, elastic bands, stability balls and balance boards. Conveniently, these tools now are available for use in the home as well as the gym.

FST should supplement traditional weight lifting and is not intended to replace it. It provides variety and additional benefits that directly transfer to common



movements performed all the time.

“Everyone needs strength simply to perform the activities of daily living,” said Christine Cunningham, MS, ATC/L, CSCS and a member of the Life Fitness Academy Training Network. “Functional strength training is becoming more popular because it is so practical; it can help people perform their daily tasks without fear of overtaxing their strength and abilities.”

Basically, in FST, exercises should mimic the movements of the real-life activity while working against resistance. For best results, train with movements that follow and are equal to or greater than the current range of motion, and are at the same speed as the activity to be performed. For example:

- A golfer who wants to maximize his or her power (and thereby lengthen the distance of his/her shots) should focus on the major muscles involved in the

golf swing from the legs and hips to the torso and through the upper body—perhaps by using a high pulley with weights and simulating his/her swing all the way from the beginning of the stroke to the follow-through.

- A senior who has difficulty getting into the car or bathtub should practice squatting movements with light weights to enhance coordination and strength.

- A mother with recurring back problems from lifting and carrying children would do well to try FST to strengthen her abdominal and lower back muscles while practicing squatting and lifting additional weight.

- And anyone who has to wrestle a heavy bag into a plane's overhead bin or a high shelf could benefit from working the chest, shoulder, back and abdominal muscles, along with simultaneously emphasizing balance and leg strength.

To get started, check with a local health club that may have personal trainers who can design a tailored FST routine. For working out at home, the new ParaBody 777 Cable Motion Gym System is ideal due to its unrestricted paths of movement and multitude of exercise options. It even comes with a helpful video and a wall chart.

Strength training isn't just about improving your physique anymore. Incorporating FST can enhance overall well-being and help you achieve your potential.