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Weight Machines or Free Weights: Which Is Better?



The debate over whether weight machines or free weights better help a person achieve fitness is not new. Recently, the trend has been away from weight machines and toward free weights, so it is worth revisiting the benefits and drawbacks of both.

Weight machines have several advantages.

For one thing, they are easy for the beginner to use and result in fewer injuries. Because they allow individual muscle groups to be isolated and worked, machines move the body through a specific range of motion with good control. And properly adjusted machines provide support for the lift.

On the downside, weight machines reduce the need for balance and coordination while lifting. Their fixed motion pattern can lead to overuse injuries. Not all machines fit all body types well, and they are not portable.

Free weights help develop balance and coordination. They can be used through a full range of motion and for many different exercises, while working on muscles in a way similar to the way the body works muscles in real life.

However, free weights are more difficult for beginners to use and result in more injuries. They also require more control than weight machines, and when working with heavy weights, a spotter may be needed.

So which is really better? The American College of Sports Medicine recommends the following options for different groups:

- **beginning and intermediate training should incorporate both free weights and machines**
- **advanced training should emphasize free weights with supplemental weight machine work**
- **seniors should use weight machines for safety**

But perhaps finding a program you enjoy is the most important factor, because if you do not like your training routine, you will not stick with it. If you are ready for a change, talk to us about designing a new program that will add variety to your current workout.