



Viva Fitness With Carol

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Hello Everyone,

Happy New Year! I hope all of you had a great holiday season. And during that time you have been wondering about my newsletter. Well...maybe not. But I am sure that everyone has been so busy with all the holiday preparations, spending time with the family and friends that this was the last thing on your mind...well, me too. But I am back now and hope to give you some helpful fitness information to get you started on your new year's resolution. I am sure you have thought about this at one time or another. What works better free weights or machines? The truth is that both methods can help you increase your strength. The choice depends on many factors, including personal preference.

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"Processed foods not only extend the shelf life, but they extend the waistline as well." ~ Karen Sessions

Raging controversy...Free Weights vs. the Machine

There is no easy answer. When used correctly, free weights can mimic real-life lifting situations and can encourage stabilizer muscles to be involved. Machines can also be useful, since they vary much in design, you have to make sure that machines adjust to your body size and do not restrict the range of motion of your joints. So what is the best piece of equipment for weight training? There are many types of resistance that can be used to give positive results. You have to find what works better for you, what is practical for your lifestyle to have success in your training. All that being said, here are some pros and cons to let you decide for yourself what might be better.

The Pros and Cons of Free Weights

Pros:

- **Versatility.** Can be used for a variety of exercises for the entire body. No moving from machine to machine to work different muscle groups.
- **Functionality.** You're able to move the body through natural motions as well as through a variety of planes allowing you to mimic movements you do in real life.
- **Building whole body strength.** Because you're supporting your own body, you can work on specific muscles while involving smaller stabilizer muscles that can get neglected with machines.

Cons:

- **Hard to learn.** It requires skill and coordination, so you may need some instruction when using them for the first time. Good form is harder to achieve without the added support from machines.
- **Risk of injury.** Because there isn't a fixed path when using free weights, it's easier to put your body in the wrong position. There's also the risk of dropping the weights, especially if you're lifting heavy.
- **Confusion.** It can be confusing about where to start because there are so many different exercises you can do with them

Pros and Cons of Machines

Pros:

- **Supportive.** Most machines provide support, which is great for people who need help when learning new exercises. It can also be good for people rehabbing injuries or those who want to lift heavy weights without a spotter.
- **Easy to use.** Because most machines work on a fixed path and have instructions and diagrams posted, it's easier to use good form.
- **Less intimidating.** Trying to figure out what to do with a bunch of dumbbells can seem impossible. With machines, you know exactly what muscles you're working and how to do the exercise correctly.

Cons:

- **Too supportive.** Because you have so much support, you use fewer muscle. This means you burn less calories and work the body in a less functional way.
- **Limited.** Most machines offer one exercise for one part of the body, so you use multiple machines for a total body workout.
- **Do not allow you to work on weaknesses.** Some machines only allow the use of both arms or legs to move the weight, so if one side is stronger than the other, that side may do more work than the weaker side.
- **Do not allow the body to work naturally.** By working on a fixed path, there's not much room for working the body throughout different planes of motion.

Bottom Line

Use free weights, machines and everything else to get the most of your workouts. Do not focus on one or the other. Exercise should only be "easy" when you are a beginner. Here are some signs to let you know your workout isn't tough enough:

- *reading as you exercise*
- *feeling mentally stressed after your workout*
- *your heart rate doesn't go up*
- *you have not increased your speed or weight amount you are lifting in more than three months and you are bored!*

See you at LifeWorks! Carol