

## The Lure and Lore of Weight Lifting

Shortly after Peyton became part of the school soccer team, his coach handed out a sheet with weight and strength training requirements for all team members. Peyton had never lifted weights before. Unluckily for him, his season ended before it began when a heavy weight landed on his left foot, bruising the bone.

Like Peyton's coach, more and more athletic coaches, trainers, and physical education teachers have discovered the health benefits of resistance training. These benefits include increased strength and endurance. Some teens are choosing, on their own, to take part in such programs—and more and more schools are providing weight-training facilities. If you are among this group, don't make the mistake Peyton did. Learn how to use the equipment safely and in a way that will maximize the health benefits.

### The Wheres and Whens

How did the practice of lifting weights get started in the first place? Some sources claim that prehistoric tribes used the lifting of heavy stones as a rite of passage to adulthood. These "manhood stones," as they were called, could often equal more than half the weight of the child attempting to lift them.

Another legend holds that Milon, a legendary wrestler of ancient Greece, trained for his sport by carrying a calf on his shoulders. Milon's countryman, the famous mathematician Archimedes, developed the system of levers and pulleys, which became the basis some 3,000 years later of the first true dedicated weight-lifting machines. These machines were developed during the mid-nineteenth century and were once used in hospitals to help patients with problems of the skeleton and/or muscular system.

Modern equipment is outfitted with computers and functions that allow the user to pinpoint muscles and muscle groups. A user might concentrate on shoulders one day, abdominal muscles the next, and so on. Today, over a hundred companies make fitness machines. Unlike their earlier counterparts, these modern machines are sold not just to hospitals, but also to fitness clubs and organizations everywhere. They are also sold to schools, like Peyton's, more and more.

### Weights and You

Does your school have a weight room? Even if it does not, you may be thinking—like so many teens—of taking up the "sport of weight-lifting." If you are, bear these tips in mind; they will help reduce the risk of injury.

- Learn the proper techniques. Each piece of weight-lifting equipment has only one right way of being used. Take the time to learn and practice the proper methods. This will help eliminate many of the more common injuries to muscles and the skeleton.
- Never try to lift too much. Don't lift *any weight* you have to strain to lift even once. Keep weights light. This is the rule that even professional bodybuilders

have begun to follow. When selecting weights, choose ones that you can lift 10 times in a row.

- Always have an adult “spotter” nearby. A spotter is someone who can catch the weight in case you accidentally drop it.

**NOTE:** According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, weight lifting and bodybuilding are not recommended for children and young teens whose bodies have not reached full physical development. In such cases, the risk of injury to muscles, bones, and joints is increased.

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