

10 Steps To Get The Most From Your Exercise Program: Part 5

By: Patricia Tremblay, BS, NSCA-CPT
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Back in the day, the mid and late 1980's, wearing a weight belt in the gym was the thing to do. I clearly remember mine. It was a beautiful black Valeo model with Velcro. No fashion less buckle belt for me, I had the Cadillac of weight belts. I also wore leg warmers, and Jane Fonda apparel. You would not catch me dead in those clothes today, because they are out of style and not all that comfortable. Clothes that are more functional have taken their place. The same can be said

for weight belts. Somewhere in the early and late 1990's, the efficiency of wearing weight belts regardless of the difficulty of the task performed was questioned. I can remember, wearing my belt more as a fashion statement than a weight lifting accessory. I may have started wearing a belt because I thought I was supposed to, but ultimately I continued to wear the belt because it "looked cool". Now, in the year 2003, I can't even recall what happened to that belt, I probably sold it at a garage sale along with my leg warmers. Weight belts were originally worn by American Olympic weightlifters, lifting hundreds of pounds. Ironically the men winning those competitions were Europeans who were NOT wearing weight belts!

This leads me to **Step #6**: Train without artificial support to obtain maximum development of the Core. Today our understanding of the stabilizer system of the body has greatly improved, thanks to research by dedicated doctors and anatomists. They have identified two major stabilizing muscle systems, the inner unit and the outer unit. The inner unit represents our "Natural weight belt". The inner unit when activated draws in the abdominal wall, which in turn creates intra-abdominal pressure. The outer unit works synergistically with the inner unit to stabilize the spine. While there are many studies for the use of weight belts, there are many more studies that indicate how the wearing of weight belts can be damaging and create muscle dysfunction. Most of the studies supporting the use of belts have been sponsored by segments of the fitness industry. Even in fitness, money can be a motivating factor in the marketing of "health and wellness". The belt can help support the body, but the question to consider is this. How are you going to ever develop those muscles, if something else has taken their job?

One of the main components of functional training is to develop the strength of the Core musculature. This is best accomplished by training without artificial support. After all we don't walk around the house with a weight lifting belt, and I have never seen anyone play

basketball, softball or golf with a belt on. Training for both strength and function will improve your game, whether it is picking up your children or shooting hoops.

Patricia Tremblay ,B.S. and is a NSCA certified personal trainer and owns Physiques By PT, a personal training and consulting company specializing in on site fitness programs.

