

Wait training

Exercising
slowly can
bring quicker
benefits

By Star Lawrence

IN THE MISTY PAST—1982—an exercise theorist named Ken Hutchins teamed with Nautilus and the University of Florida to see how frail older women could use professional gym equipment to build bone and increase strength. They found that if the women performed the exercises slowly, they achieved both goals—increased strength and bone growth—without injury.

Almost 20 years later, in a Massachusetts study of older women, which was published in the *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*, participants did a dozen exercises. The control group did 10 repetitions of each, pulling the weight up and bringing it down in two seconds in each direction—the usual pace. The other group did five repetitions, 10 seconds up, four seconds down. That's 14 seconds of muscle clenching on each rep, instead of four. Multiply that by five reps and 12 exercises, and it's a strenuous workout.

The bottom line was so surprising, the researchers had to recheck it. The women who performed slow-speed training attained 50 percent greater strength gains than the subjects who performed standard-speed training.

The 2001 Massachusetts study came as no surprise to Hutchins, a Costco member, who by that time had developed SuperSlow, a trademarked form of conditioning that can be used by people of all ages and stages of fitness. It may be simple, but it's not easy—and has been known to wear out Marine drill instructors. The principle is to lift and lower weight in each series of exercises to a slow count—Hutchins prefers 10 seconds up, 10 down, to the point of muscle failure. This eliminates the use of momentum—the whole impact is on contraction of the muscles.

Hutchins' protocol involves six to eight exercises, outlined in his book *SuperSlow: The Ultimate Exercise Protocol* (Media Support, 1992), a technical manual going into its fourth printing.



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While the exercises themselves are not out of the ordinary, and can be used with standard weight machines or free weights, it is the approach that sets SuperSlow apart.

Using an amount of weight you can manage competently, you perform each exercise until you can no longer lift. The program promises optimal fitness in two 20-minute sessions a week. Hutchins discourages running, cross-training or aerobics on the off days. The muscles need time to recover, he says. That is key to strengthening them.

Hutchins also believes in a quiet, cool environment with proper equipment and ventilation. Sweating means you have lost mechanical efficiency, he says.

Hutchins says SuperSlow prevents injury, as there is no jerking or pulling. He also says there is study evidence that SuperSlow lowers cholesterol, improves glucose economy, increases insulin sensitivity and increases hormonal output. It may increase bone density as much as 1 percent a month as well.

Is there anyone who should not try this? Hutchins says he cannot think of anyone who would not benefit. He has taught people in nursing homes to do it. "The studies show older people benefit, beginners, people at an exercise plateau and professionals as well," he says.

Another criticism is that SuperSlow can be boring. "Boring?" Hutchins exclaims. "I have clients who have done this for 20 years." He adds that it's a plus that the program remains the same. You don't have to learn something new. Just do it—slowly. [E]

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