

Weight training injuries on the rise in US

By Keith Mulvihill

NEW YORK, Aug 15 (Reuters Health) - The number of Americans who want to look buff has grown by leaps and bounds--but the downside to the quest for fitness is that more and more people are getting injured, study findings suggest.

Researchers estimate that just under a million people were treated for injuries related to weight-training activity or equipment between 1978 and 1998.

In a new study, investigators analyzed data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Electronic Injury Surveillance System, which records information for 101 hospitals nationwide. The findings are published in the July issue of *The Physician and Sports Medicine*.

"We wanted to find out if injuries related to weight training had increased over and above the rate of increase for the population of the United States," according to lead author Dr. Chester Jones, of the University of Arkansas.

The researchers found that injuries related to weight-training that required emergency room treatment increased by 35% between 1978 and 1998. About 1 in 4 of these injuries occurred due to misuse or abuse of weight training equipment.

Of particular interest--and concern--are some of the age groups that saw steep increases in injuries. Men over the age of 65 saw a 303% increase, and older women aged 45 to 65 saw a 281% increase in the number of injuries related to weight training.

"These age groups are participating in greater numbers. Twenty years ago, not many people in these age groups weight trained," Jones told Reuters Health in an interview. "Many older adults are aware of the health benefits of lifting weights, like (fighting) osteoporosis."

Jones also pointed out that the number of injuries is greatest in those working out at home, underscoring the need for supervision, or a workout partner, to lessen the chance of injury.

And the study identified young children, specifically boys aged 4 and under, as a group that is increasingly vulnerable to injury from weight training equipment.

"A lot more people have equipment in their homes and parents don't realize the risk of injury to children," Jones added. "It is important to keep weights and weight equipment away from children."

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