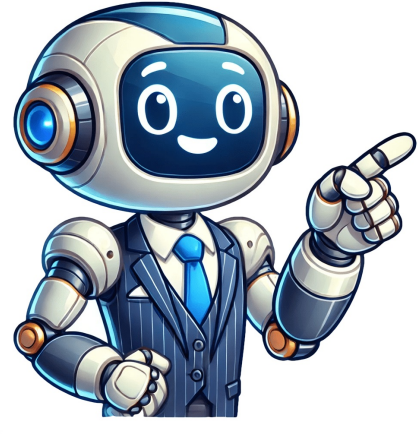


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If you've ever set foot in a gym, you've probably noticed kettlebells in the weight room. But why reach for one of these oddly shaped weights over a set of dumbbells? Since most kettlebell movements involve a swinging motion, this type of weight training activates your entire body rather than just your arm, shoulder, and back muscles. "Kettlebells challenge your body through cardiovascular movement unlike any other piece of equipment," explains Holly Roser, NASM-certified personal trainer. In fact, kettlebell training is such an effective workout, you can strengthen your entire body through kettlebell training alone. Interested in learning more about kettlebell workouts? Here's what you need to know about kettlebell training — from the benefits of using kettlebells to proper form and beyond. "Kettlebell training involves using a [ball-shaped] weight with a handle with the intention of adding a swing," explains ShaNay Norvell, NSPA-certified personal trainer. Kettlebells range from as small as 1 pound all the way up to 100 pounds, and kettlebell training exercises are incredibly versatile and engage the whole body. Some movements require additional strength from the legs and hips. Others involve swinging the kettlebell from one hand to the other. "The swinging movement immediately incorporates the core and greatly increases heart rate, providing cardiovascular benefits," says Norvell. Kettlebell training has been around much longer than you likely realize — for hundreds of years, in fact. Kettlebells are one of the oldest forms of fitness equipment in history, dating back to ancient Greece. The first iteration of a swingable weight, known as a haltere, was invented in the fifth century B.C. But kettlebells, as you know them today, were popularized by Pavel Tsatouline, a former Russian Special Forces trainer and author of *The Russian Kettlebell Challenge*. This kettlebell training manual was utilized by Russian soldiers and Olympic athletes to achieve peak physical performance. "The beauty of working with a kettlebell is that it doesn't require other equipment outside of the kettlebell and your body," says Norvell. To protect your feet, wear flat-soled strength training shoes that offer proper stability when kettlebell training. You may also want to utilize an exercise mat for any kettlebell exercises done on the floor. Kettlebell training provides a low-impact, full-body workout that strengthens muscles and improves cardiovascular health. Here are the key benefits of kettlebell training. Want to improve your core strength and stability? Kettlebell training is by far the most powerful weight training method for activating your core. "Because of the [kettlebell's] shape, your body has to work harder to lift and swing it," explains Roser. Classic kettlebell moves, including the popular kettlebell swing, require your core to stay engaged to keep your lower body stable, which is why kettlebell training is so effective for strengthening the core. What do you get when you combine strength training with cardio? The heart-pumping benefits of kettlebell training. In particular, kettlebell swings are especially effective for cardio when compared to other workouts. Research has found that kettlebell swings provide a better cardiorespiratory challenge than traditional circuit weight training, greater cardiovascular benefits than a Tabata workout, and the same heart rate exertion as running on a treadmill — just to name a few. One big benefit of kettlebell training is that it allows you to train the total body, says Norvell. Kettlebell exercises work upper and lower body muscles, such as the hamstrings and glutes, along with upper body muscles like the back, shoulders, and arms. Since one or both feet remain on the ground during kettlebell exercises, kettlebell training is considered a low-impact workout — meaning it won't put additional strain on your joints. Traditional strength training exercises, such as hitting up the squat rack or reaching for a heavy pair of dumbbells, can feel like putting, even for gym regulars. Picking up a kettlebell allows you to bypass the bi-dimensional gym equipment, and the kettlebell delivers a workout that's just as effective as training with heavier weights. In a recent study, researchers determined that swinging a 17-pound kettlebell yielded similar strength training results as performing 32-pound deadlifts with kettlebells. So if you want the benefits of heavy lifting without the heavy weight, kettlebell training might be for you. Kettlebell training is extremely versatile, as it can easily be tailored to individual fitness goals and needs. Here are a few key kettlebell exercises to get familiar with. Mastering a kettlebell swing is an absolute must for kettlebell training. This move is popular in kettlebell workouts and acts as the foundation for intermediate and advanced kettlebell exercises. To properly execute the kettlebell swing, start with your feet hip-width apart and your kettlebell on the floor slightly in front of you, says Roser. With a flat back and bent knees, pick up the kettlebell with both hands and hike it back between the legs. Then, drive the kettlebell forward using your hips and glutes. "The idea is to use the force from your hip hinge to bring the kettlebell to the shoulder height or a little bit lower than shoulder height," continues Roser. Keep your back flat throughout the movement, and engage your core to protect your lower back. A kettlebell halo exercise involves a circular motion that mimics a "halo" shape (hence the name). Hold the kettlebell by the handle, then circle around the head pausing in front of the chest and alternating the direction each time, explains Norvell. Halos activate your upper body along with your core and obliques, and they can be done standing for a full-body workout or kneeling to isolate the upper body and core. This full-body exercise is perfect for kettlebell beginners. To perform a high pull, start with the kettlebell on the ground and your feet wider than hip-width apart. Squat down and grab the kettlebell by the handle with both hands. Drive your feet into the ground as you straighten your legs to stand. Simultaneously, pull the kettlebell up toward your chin, finishing with your elbows raised in a Y-shape. Lower the kettlebell and let your arms hang long, then squat down to touch the kettlebell to the ground and repeat. Looking for more kettlebell exercises? Try these moves. Want to incorporate kettlebell training into your workout routine? Try kettlebell training two to three times per week if you're a beginner, recommends Norvell. You know your body best, but to get started, try doing one of the five different kettlebell exercises such as the ones listed above, repeating 15-20 times per exercise for three rounds each. Here are a few more kettlebell workouts to consider: If you're new to kettlebell training start with lighter weights (5 to 10 pounds) while learning proper form and technique. Then work your way up to heavier kettlebells, advises Norvell.

"Because there are some [kettlebell] moves that are very challenging to your core, there is a risk of herniating a disc or pulling a muscle," cautions Roser. Before moving on to more advanced kettlebell movements or increasing kettlebell weight, consider working with a fitness professional. "Work with a coach to help you through these moves, as kettlebells are very challenging and require the correct muscles to be fired to achieve the best results," says Roser. Thanks for your feedback! These days, every gym has kettlebells, that includes big-box, commercial bodybuilding gyms. It's clear that kettlebells have become a staple training tool for the entire fitness industry. From CrossFitters to pro athletes to traditional weightlifters, everyone is using them... However, there are still some people, potentially myself included, who are skeptical about whether they should incorporate kettlebells into their training plan. Well, if you have any doubt, we are here to tell you that you absolutely shouldn't. Why, ask you? Are kettlebells actually effective? What kettlebell benefits and performance and physical enhancements can I expect to achieve? Great questions... We have answers. Ultimate Kettlebell Guide Containing 41 exercises, 10 complexes, and an 8 week program that you can follow. We've created the only guide you'll need to master the kettlebell and bring your training to the next level...

Top 18 Benefits of Kettlebells Based on research, personal experience and opinions from the fitness community, here are 18 benefits of kettlebells and kettlebell training: 1. All-In-One Total Body Conditioning Tool Kettlebells can be used for strength, endurance, flexibility and balance training... the four main aspects of fitness. This is definitely one of the biggest benefits of kettlebells. They are versatile and they simplify things! In a fast-paced complex world, the ability to do total body conditioning with one tool is a nice change of pace. In fact, we'd go out on a limb and say kettlebells are one of the best tools in existence for truly effectively result-achieving, safe, full-body conditioning. 2. Improves Core Strength & Stability There are a few reasons why kettlebells are fantastic for improving core strength and stability. First, many kettlebell exercises are a form of ballistic training. Ballistic training works on explosive power through maximizing acceleration and minimizing deceleration. These explosive movements stimulate the abdominal muscles tremendously well. They require core contraction and coordinated breathing as the movements are intense. This leads to serious improvement in core strength, even when not necessarily targeting your core like you would with crunches or leg raises. Second, kettlebell movements are multiplanar, so you will be working your core from all directions. This is essential to building well-rounded core strength. Third, some of the best kettlebell movements are offset and unilateral as you will only be using one kettlebell. When moving the kettlebell around on one side, you will be working your core stability and strength big time. These are all vital reasons why athletes train with kettlebells. Athletes need core power to explode through opponents, quickly change/move in multiple directions without risking injury (twisting, turning, accelerating/decelerating), and handle loads and pressure from one side while remaining upright (think a running back taking a hit on one side during a play). Kettlebell training offers a dynamic way to accomplish these important physical capabilities. Remember, your core generates and controls force, so having a powerful trunk is essential to kicking ass at life. 3. Enhances Body Awareness & Coordination Kettlebell movements are very dynamic. You will be swinging them around - above you, to your side, in between your legs, side to side - and this will necessitate that you are completely aware of your body. This focus and mind to muscle connection will develop, leading you to improved proprioception (coordination; the sense of movement of the body and its parts). This is very different than conventional training with barbells or machines because the movements are linear and less dynamic. It's very important to develop your sense of movement (aka proprioception & kinesthesia). This ability will carry over into improvements in your fitness and life, and it's certainly a very important aspect of athleticism. 4. Improves Balance & Stabilizer Muscles When training with machines, you are producing force as you move in a predetermined path. Conversely, when training with kettlebells, you must control the movement path. This requires you to double down on strengthening the stabilizer muscles for each particular movement. Having strong stabilizer muscles in all ranges of movement, coupled with increased core power as we discussed in one of the benefits of kettlebells above, means your balance will be exceptional. 5. Serious Fat-Burning Workouts Kettlebells offer crazy calorie-burning potential, which means FAT LOSS. ACE did a study that showed swinging a kettlebell burns as many as 20 calories per minute. That's around 400 calories for a 20-minute workout! To do that running, you'd need to be running at a 6-minute per mile pace. What's more, kettlebell training for losing fat is often high intensity, so you have the after-burn effect as well. This is called EPOC, Excess post-exercise oxygen consumption. For those who don't know, this means you will be burning calories at a higher rate long after your workout has finished. 6. Great Non-Running Cardio Alternative Remember, a kettlebell is a full-body conditioning tool...and that extends to cardio training too. Thanks to the versatility of kettlebells, you can do a power-packed cardio session with just one kettlebell. If you are looking to burn calories in a short space of time, a lightweight kettlebell HIIT or metabolic workout (low weight, high rep, high intensity based workouts) will do the job incredibly well. In fact, many think it is more effective than steady-state cardio for burning fat, boosting metabolism, muscular endurance, and improving cardiovascular health. The key is to maintain a high heart rate for the entire workout. As mentioned in the benefit above, kettlebell cardio training includes EPOC, which means you will be burning fat long after your workout is completed. Potentially up to 24 hours of "after-burn" effect. Now, it should be noted that this type of training is "repetition" based muscular endurance while running is long-distance muscular endurance. So, if your goal is to have long-distance endurance, for say a marathon, don't stop at the end of your kettlebell workout. 7. Increases Range of Motion (Mobility & Flexibility) Kettlebells keep the body loose as the exercises movement patterns rather than isolation exercises. Kettlebell movement patterns require you to move through multiple planes of motion while controlling the force, torque and range of motion. Naturally, you will be improving your mobility by slowly increasing your limits. Over time, you will have much greater flexibility and your joints will become more stable and strong. When it comes to sports and the real world, this is crucial as it will decrease the chance of injury in your joints, ligaments, and muscles. 9. Builds Lean Muscle Kettlebell exercises won't build crazy mass like heavy barbell exercises can. Instead, it increases the amount of lean muscle tissue. You'll notice that people who take kettlebell training seriously, they train with high intensity and are ripped. They have lean muscle mass, not big bulky bodybuilding type bodies. Not many people these days want to be huge, not only is it a pain to eat enough to get that big, but once you are huge, you lack the ability to move at your best potential. Kettlebells will make you look great and move even better. Kettlebells can build dense muscle, which is achieved by higher repetitions and shorter yet intense workouts. This method of training is best for boosting metabolism (i.e. metabolic workouts). Note: If you are new to fitness, you will surely be able to put on some serious muscle mass with kettlebells if you know what you are doing. And if you have been bodybuilding for years, your muscles will become leaner and tighter, which in our opinion looks much better. Related: Here's how you can build muscle with kettlebells 10. Develops a Stronger Posterior Chain and Improves Posture Kettlebells are excellent for the posterior chain. Many of the best kettlebell exercises target your entire backside. Exercises like the Kettlebell Swings are ballistic movements done from a hinge position, which will make your glutes, hamstrings, lower back, middle back, and traps exceptionally powerful. This translate to jumping higher, running faster, and kicking harder. And, probably most importantly, it will lead to better posture. But, it's not just your posterior chain that will be put to the test. By regularly doing kettlebell workouts, you will rapidly develop the major muscles of your hips, core, shoulders, and neck too...and these are all vital aspects of having good posture and a strong backside. 11. Grip Strength Ever see someone using wrist wraps to do pull-ups? What does this tell you? Exactly...their grip strength is lacking behind their lat and back strength. But why is this not an issue to them? Well, many people in the mainstream fitness world don't think grip strength is that important. It's not like they are wrestlers or labor workers, right? Well, we disagree. Grip strength is one of the most important things in fitness and life. You use your grip for just about every exercise that involves weights. The stronger your grip is, the stronger you are. Grip strength has been proven to correlate to increased strength. Plus, having a strong grip is a primal feature that naturally makes us appear powerful to others. And who doesn't want that? Anyway, this isn't about why grip strength is important, we've done a whole article on the benefits of grip strength, which you can read. Now, to the point of this specific benefit of kettlebell training. If you do kettlebell workouts consistently, you will develop supremely powerful grip strength. This is because the weight of the kettlebell is not going to be placed in the center of your palm like it is with a barbell. Kettlebells have an offset center of gravity, usually about 6 to 8 inches away from your grip on the handle, so it is harder to control. This means the weight is not balanced in your hand. This is going to make your forearms, wrists and fingers work overtime as you try to control the kettlebell during exercises. The result, your grip will be strengthened from every angle. Kettlebells are definitely one of the best tools for building vice-like grip strength, as are steel maces too... 12. Improves Cardiovascular Health Cardiovascular health is the foundation of fitness. Weaknesses & Muscle Imbalances Kettlebells can help you pinpoint weaknesses in your strength, movement and coordination. You may notice that you lack mobility in the overhead position or that your right side is stronger than your left. When you notice this, you can easily target specific areas and perform movements that will help you even things out. It is said that kettlebells get you comfortable in uncomfortable positions, and this is very true for those who have been training with barbells and machines for a long time. Working on your weaknesses and imbalances is very important for becoming resilient to injuries. Everyone has muscle imbalances, but not everyone takes action to correct them. Most just compensate by adjusting their form, engaging muscles that shouldn't be engaged, or using momentum instead of force. Compensation is not something you want to do when it comes to fitness. Instead, focus on your sticking points and get past them! 13. Trains You To Move Better (Multiplanar Exercises) The beauty of kettlebell training is that it will train you through all three planes of motion. You won't be training just in the sagittal plane like you would with squats and deadlifts. Kettlebell exercises and workouts involve seamless transitions from movement to movement, in different directions and planes of motion. This means you will be building strength from multiple angles, which is essential for real-world, functional strength and sports. What's more, this is how you become resilient to injury and develop all-around strength. This is how you become "combat ready". 14. Low Risk, High Reward (Safer and More Effective) Kettlebell training is generally safer than traditional lifts like heavy barbell squats, deadlifts and bench press. To get an effective muscular strength workout and to induce hypertrophy, you can do heavy weights, you can do high intensity, short workouts. High intensity and short workouts are the 4 key components of fitness, therefore the kettlebell who would benefit from kettlebells, specifically the option of getting a squat rack, barbell, weighted plates, dumbbells, a bench, etc., all you really need is a set of kettlebells. Not only it will be more cost-friendly, but it will also only take up a fraction of the space. You could leave them in your living room or garage without cluttering it, which is definitely not possible with a conventional gym set up. What's more, if you want to do a workout at the park or outside, kettlebells can easily transport to wherever you want to train. You could throw them in your car and be on your way in seconds. Kettlebells are certainly one of the most effective portable training tools to ever exist. Effective because they are so damn versatile. 18. Versatile Workouts (Both Fun & Effective) The more fun a workout is, the more likely you are to stick with it and do it consistently. Kettlebell training is fun for a few reasons. First, the exercises are based on movement patterns which means you will be more involved in what you are actually doing. Comparing to simply moving through the motions with machines and typical conventional training, kettlebell exercises require you to be more mindful. Second, you can take kettlebells anywhere. You can get a workout in outside, at a place with your favorite scenery. This is definitely a nice way to spice up your training. Third, the training will be new for you, and when tackling something new, we are more likely to find enjoyment in it. 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People who would benefit from kettlebells are those who are keeping their cortisol levels low. In the end, both heavyweight lifts and intense kettlebell workouts are effective. However, the risk to reward ratio is far better with kettlebells than heavy barbell lifts. Kettlebells put much less pressure on your spine. Here is a great kettlebell workout for beginners. 15. Improves Joint Health Kettlebell workouts will improve or maintain joint health. Kettlebell exercises are dynamic so they require deliberate control. This will build joint strength and stability by strengthening the muscles that support your joints (stabilizer complexes). Moreover, dynamic kettlebell routines will improve joint flexibility and mobility, as we have already mentioned above. This is best achieved with light to medium weight kettlebells. As you develop more elasticity in the tendons and ligaments of your joints, you will become more resilient to injury. What's more, lightweight kettlebell exercises can help to reduce inflammation and swelling. So, if long term joint health is important to you, which is should be for all of us, you should definitely take on kettlebell training. 16. Simplifies Your Training You don't need tons of equipment or to overcomplicate your workouts for them to be effective. Simple is proven. Simple works. All you need is consistency. If we were stranded on an island and we could choose one training tool, it would definitely be a kettlebell. This is because, with kettlebells, you can train strength, endurance, balance and flexibility. That's all you need... so, if you are overwhelmed with all the equipment out there, simplify your life by attacking kettlebell training. All you need is a 30 minute workout each day. Moreover, you don't need fancy exercises. The standard, best kettlebell exercises can train your entire body. 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