



THE ONLY SUPPLEMENTS YOU NEED TO GET THE BODY YOU WANT.

HOW MUSCLE MEMORY CAN HELP YOU GAIN MUSCLE & STRENGTH FASTER



“Muscle memory.”

It sounds hokey. Like part of a pitch for a miracle pill, powder, or exercise protocol.

I mean...I’m pretty sure there aren’t any neurons hiding in our biceps, so what can they remember, exactly? If you’ve had those thoughts, I understand.

It’s good, actually—a gimlet eye and rational skepticism will save you from wasting untold amounts of time and money on good-for-nothing supplements, diets, and workout programs.

In this case, though, you can let your guard down.

As you’ll soon see, while “muscle memory” may be a bit of a misnomer, it’s a well-established phenomenon that has science on its side.

It’s very real and, quite frankly, very encouraging, because it highlights one of the many long-term payoffs of regular exercise and healthy living.

WHAT IS MUSCLE MEMORY?

One of the reasons muscles are capable of impressive levels of growth is the muscle cells themselves are specially equipped to grow. They’re quite large and contain multiple nuclei, which allows them to easily replicate and combine to form muscle fibers that can then contract and extend.

Mechanically speaking, muscle growth works like this:

- ✓ You train your muscles.
- ✓ Nuclei are added to the muscle cells.
- ✓ Smaller “satellite cells” begin to accumulate around these new nuclei, resulting in bigger, stronger muscles.

Now, if you stop working out for an extended period of time, you know what happens in the mirror and in the gym: your muscles shrink and your strength skids. If you’ve experienced this and simply chalked it up to “losing muscle,” you’re not alone—that has long been the assumption.

We now know it’s not that simplistic, though.

Interestingly, new research shows that while the satellite cells in muscles can come and go, both the old and newly acquired nuclei are retained—even during times of severe muscle atrophy.

Some scientists speculate this “nuclei retention” period is at least 3 months, and others believe it’s more or less permanent—that the nuclei are never lost.

It also appears that the earlier in life that you start the process of gaining muscle and strength, the greater the benefits are down the road, when muscle is harder to gain and factors more and more into our overall health and quality of life.

HOW DOES MUSCLE MEMORY WORK?

Here’s what actually happens during the cycle of training, detraining, and re-training:

Training creates nuclei, which leads to muscle growth.

When muscles are overloaded through resistance training, new nuclei are acquired. Further training (along with a proper diet) then allows these nuclei to synthesize muscle proteins that create larger and stronger muscle fibers.

Detraining leads to atrophy, but nuclei stick around.

During periods of detraining, muscles resist atrophy because of the nuclei they’ve gained. And even if the detraining period continues for an extended period of time, nuclei are not lost despite the loss of satellite cells, which result in smaller muscles.

When training resumes, nuclei are ready and willing.

This is why, after a period of detraining, previously trained muscles are primed to grow more rapidly once training resumes. The “hard part” of muscle growth (creating new nuclei) has already been done, and these nuclei are able to immediately jump into action and begin synthesizing proteins.

That, in a nutshell, is how muscle memory works.

Your muscles don’t remember anything per se—training just causes long-term adaptations that make it easier to regain muscle size and strength.

THE BOTTOM LINE ON MUSCLE MEMORY

Lifting weights is kind of like riding a bike.

Once you've spent some time mastering the skill (perhaps enduring a few skinned knees or roll-away barbells), it's easier to get back in the saddle—even after an extended hiatus—thanks partially to muscle memory.

Regaining size and strength simply doesn't require nearly as much time and work as gaining it in the first place does (and you can do it with a lot less exercise than you might think, too!).

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