

# New Year's Resolution: Lift Weights

VICTOR ROWSE

*It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but there are sound physiological reasons why everyone should lift something heavy from time to time.*

**W**eight lifting. It's all a bit macho, isn't it? The grunting, the distorted facial expressions, the tight vests, etc. And what's more, it doesn't burn a particularly large amount of energy, even taking into account the so-called after-burn effect, or EPOC (Excess Post-exercise Oxygen Consumption). So why bother, exactly?

Put simply, weight lifting is important for maintaining optimal health because your body is designed to bear loads. And if you don't undertake any load-bearing activities, over time your body will degenerate.

As we age, we have a natural tendency to lose muscle, a process called *sarcopenia*. In the absence of any weight-lifting activity, we will lose roughly 0.5-1% of our muscle mass per year after the age of 25. So, assuming you're a fairly trim 65kg in your early 20s, by the time you reach 35, you will already have lost around three kilograms of muscle. Not only would this mean a lower metabolic rate (as muscle is metabolically active tissue), but it would also mean a decline in your functional strength and the worsening of your joint health (muscle plays an important role in making your joints more stable),

putting you at greater risk of injury.

Your bones need to be placed under stress from time to time otherwise they too are going to start bailing out on you. Weight lifting, again, can come to the rescue, by stimulating bone formation. When you lift weights, your muscles pull on your bones in order to produce movement. This stress creates microscopic cracks in the bone structure, which your body will compensate for by laying down more minerals. Having higher bone mineral density helps protect you from the sorts of fractures experienced by osteoporosis sufferers and weight lifting, therefore, will make your body less susceptible to injury in the long-term.

Another important reason for lifting weights has to do with increasing your body's sensitivity to insulin. Insulin is the master weight-loss hormone and it plays a critical metabolic function in transporting glucose from the blood to your body cells to meet energy requirements. Each time you lift weights, you cleave significant

amounts of glycogen from the large powerful muscle fibres in your body, which is important both in boosting your body's sensitivity to insulin and subsequently replenishing it in your muscles. Improving your body's sensitivity to insulin will mean lower insulin levels and more efficient fat metabolism, which means that you are not only at less risk of suffering from conditions such as diabetes, but are also able to lose weight more effectively.

Conclusion: lifting weights isn't just for meatheads. Weight lifting plays a critical role in counteracting the diminishment of the body's functions with ageing as well as helping you stay trim.

All other

things being equal, people who lift weights will enjoy fewer joint problems, less injuries, a lower body fat percentage, and a longer, more active life than their non weight-lifting counterparts.

So why not make it your New Year's Resolution to give weight lifting a try?

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## Electric People Carrier

MARK ANDREWS

*Looking to buy a new car? Talk test drives the Zotye M300 EV to see how it weighs in against the current competition.*

**B**YD, which originally started as a rechargeable battery manufacturer, has grabbed the electric vehicle limelight in China, thanks, in part, to legendary investor Warren Buffet's purchase of 10% of the company in 2008. However, Zotye a smaller Chinese manufacturer surprisingly beat them to the consumer market with sales of cars in 2010. Zotye offer two electric vehicles: the diminutive 5008 EV based on the old Daihatsu Terios (a micro SUV) and the far more rounded M300 EV (pictured).

Europeans might feel that the M300 bears a striking resemblance to a short, distinctive people-carrier: the Fiat Multipla. This is

because after Fiat stopped production in 2010, Zotye secured manufacturing rights from the company and began full scale production in China. Initially only a 1.6 litre petrol version was produced. However, since, the M500 EV has been newly introduced to the Chinese market.

The Zotye M300 looks nearly identical to the second generation Fiat, albeit with the wrinkles smoothed out. The design is a little old, but it manages not to look out of place next to more modern competition. The panel fit is generally good but the rear hatch does seem uneven and it also takes some force to open and close the doors.

Inside, the M300 is also largely a carryover in design - if not materials - from the Fiat. One welcome addition

on the Zotye is an LCD display, which offers a sat-nav system (in both English and Chinese), a reversing camera with aiming grid to aid parking, and MP3 player, along with battery management information which helps identify problems with individual cells and shows remaining range.

The main drawback is a lack of steering mounted

controls, which does give the M300 a dated look, not helped by the poor quality of the internal plastics.

For an MPV, this car is very short at a touch under 4.1 metres, however where the Zotye makes up in accommodation is with its wide stance. There are both five and six-seater variants, the sixth seat being in the front, thanks to the drive selector being dash mounted. On the five-seater, the space between the two front seats is occupied by a fridge.

On setting off, there is a slight reverberation and an audible whir from the electric engine - otherwise the drive is largely silent. Zotye are cagey with official acceleration figures but in normal traffic conditions, the M300 doesn't appear lacking. The steering is heavy for a Chinese car due to its Italian origins.

Thanks to safety regulations many modern cars suffer from poor visibility, but with its commanding height and plenty of glass, the M300 isn't one of them. While its performance is never going to excite - it is an MPV after all - the car handles placidly and does not roll badly on corners.



While it doesn't have the electric range of the BYD E6, it is a more polished product than earlier versions of that car and has a lot of space. As an inner city people-mover it is a good choice. However, those who need longer journeys might do better to consider the 1.6 litre petrol engine.

Ultimately it is only as green as your electricity supply and doesn't come cheap; list price is RMB 268,000 compared to the petrol version's RMB 70,000. Government subsidies for RMB 120,000 of the M300 EV's cost are available, however, making it a relatively competitive RMB 148,000.

