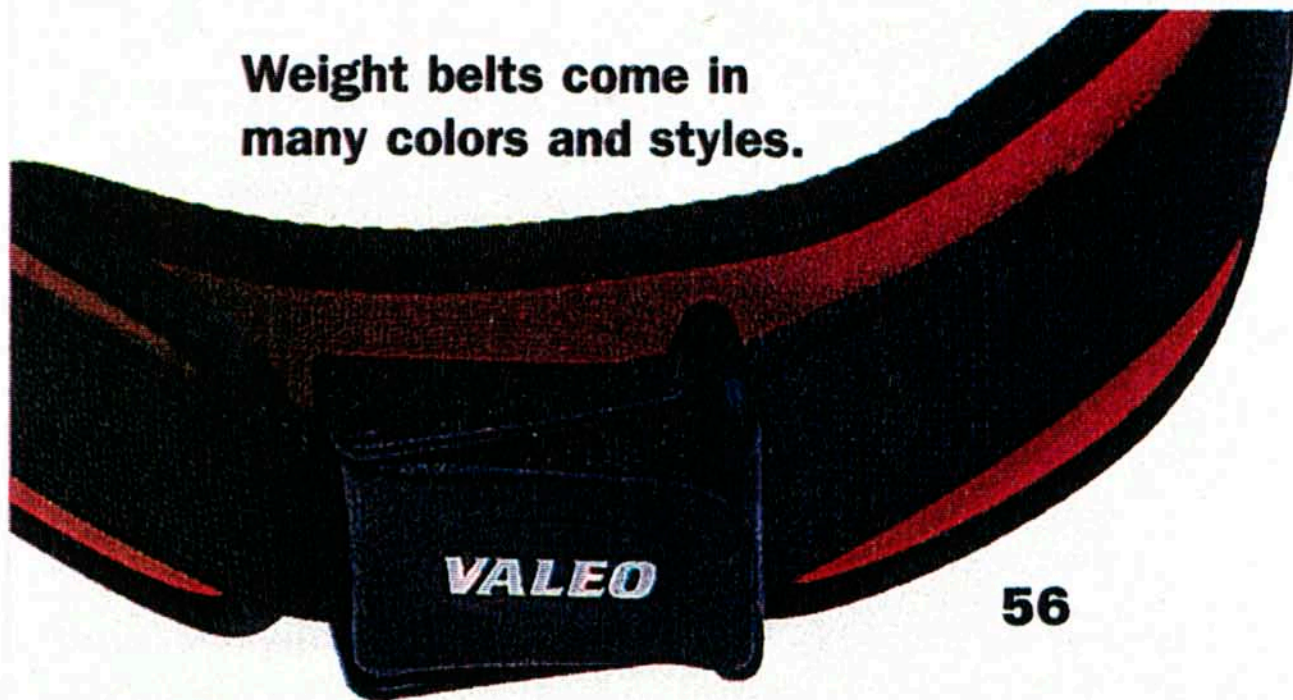


WHAT GIVES?

Q: My gym is filled with big guys wearing weight belts. Occasionally, I see women wearing them too. What are they for, and do I need one?

Weight belts come in many colors and styles.



weight belts

A: "Weight belts were originally used by power and competitive lifters who believed they would support and protect the lower back and reduce the risk of injury," explains New York City chiropractor Joseph Caraccilo. But there is little, if any, documentation to their value. "Using a weight belt on heavy lifts may provide some support," Caraccilo concedes, "but for the kind of weight involved in the average workout for women and men, it isn't required—and prolonged use can lead to a dependency on the belt rather than on the back."