How Dangerous Is Lifting Heavy?

Many people understandably have concerns about the risks of heavy lifting in the gym. How dangerous is heavy lifting really? This question has actually been quite thoroughly researched. Here’s what several studies have shown:

* One study surveyed 97 incorporated powerlifting clubs (Powerlifting is a sport that aims for maximum weight lifted in the squat, bench press and deadlift), to determine how often these athletes sustained injuries and in what way. **The data showed a rate of 1 injury per 1000 hours of training**, and these injuries were very often not serious enough to cause a disruption in training. This rate is considered low compared to other sports (Siewe J , Rudat J , Röllinghoff M , Schlegel UJ , Eysel P , Michael JW 2011).
* Another study measured incidents of injury for football players on a strength training program, and found a rate of **0.13 injuries per 1000** hours of weight training. It should be noted that these athletes were considered well coached and there have been other studies showing higher incidence of injury where the quality of coaching was less clear (Zemper, 1990).
* The vast majority of the injuries reported in the study by Zemper (1990) were classified as muscle strains, sprains, abrasions, cramps and tendonitis. There were few tears, hernias, fractures or dislocations.
* These **rates of injury were far less than those reported for many collegiate sports** such as men’s soccer, football and basketball, as reported by Jennifer M Hootman, PhD, ATC, FACSM, Randall Dick, MA, FACSM,† and Julie Agel, MA, ATC‡ in their study spanning the 16 years between 1988 to 2004.

In summary, there are risks to lifting heavy just as there are with any strenuous physical activity, but they are relatively rare and most often not severe. Proper technique and good coaching are essential for lifting heavy for the long term.

I hope this put some of you lifting-phobes at ease! Now go pick up heavy things!