



Strength training

EXERCISE FOR THE INDEPENDENCE-MINDED PERSON

Bodybuilding for fun and profit may best be left to the young. But there's something to be said for building muscles in later life: independence and quality of life.

Most people lose 20 to 40 percent of their muscle tissue as they get older. Muscle loss makes it harder to perform routine activities, such as carrying groceries, climbing stairs, or just getting out of a chair. And with less muscle you are at increased risk for falls and broken bones.

Happily, strength training can help restore muscle. Add some aerobic exercise, such as walking

and swimming, and you may do even more to promote your well-being, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

How to build muscle Whether you work out at home or in a supervised setting, such as a fitness center, consider this information from the CDC and the National Institute on Aging.



To view a series of animated exercise illustrations, visit the CDC at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). Type "strength training" in the search bar. Click on *Strength Training for Older Adults ...*. In the boxed table of contents, click on *Exercises*.

Lifting or pushing against weight

can strengthen muscles. You can buy weights or use milk jugs filled with sand, for example. Fitness centers have special weight machines. Whatever devices you choose, make sure you know how to use them.

Resistance exercise can also help

build muscles. One common method is to use an inexpensive device that resembles a giant rubber band to stretch your arms or legs against the band's natural resistance.

Over time you should increase the number of times you can do an activity. Eventually, you should be able to lift heavier weights and exert stronger pressure against resistance.

Talk to your doctor before you begin a new exercise program if you have not exercised for a while or if you have a heart condition, arthritis, diabetes, or high blood pressure. A physical therapist or personal trainer can show you how to exercise safely.

Setting goals

Having a goal can help you maintain your routine. You may want to take long walks or do all of your own chores. Or you might have certain health issues to overcome. Whatever your goal, it's a step on your way toward greater strength and vitality.

Smart ways to protect your bones

Make no bones about it: Osteoporosis is hazardous to your health. But you can help keep bones strong using this advice from the National Institutes of Health.

Exercise. Weight-bearing exercise, such as walking and climbing stairs, three or more times a week is good for your bones. Strengthening

exercises—like lifting weights—build muscles and help prevent falls.

Get enough calcium and vitamin D.

Nonfat and low-fat dairy products enriched with vitamin D help meet your need for both. Other good food choices are leafy green vegetables and whole grains. Exposing skin to sunlight a few

minutes a day increases vitamin D production. Your doctor may advise taking supplements to get enough of these nutrients.

Avoid smoking and alcohol. Smoking promotes bone loss; alcohol increases your risk for falls.

Ask your doctor about medication. It can help stop bone loss.