

# STRENGTH TRAINING



## Exercise module

### Beginning Strength Training

Strengthening your muscles is an important part of improving fitness. Strong muscles help prevent injuries and some chronic problems, such as lower back pain. Just like cardio exercise, with strength training, your body uses stored fat and carbohydrates as fuel. An additional benefit of strength training is that it helps you maintain your weight loss since muscle burns three times more calories than fat does. Strength training can range from something as simple as lifting a can of tomatoes to working out with weight machines to performing Olympic lifts.

Strength is increased when a muscle has to work harder than usual. Helpful ways to begin strength training include simple strengthening exercises include using your body as resistance, like lifting your arms and legs, leaning against a wall with your legs bent, or pushing against a stationary object.

Weights can also be used for strength training. Hand and ankle weights are inexpensive and can be purchased at your local sporting goods store. But if you don't have weights handy, you can use household items such as canned goods or plastic bottles filled with water or sand.

When you first start strength training, choose a weight that you can lift 15 times comfortably without feeling tired. When you can lift this weight 20 times, increase the weight by two to five pounds for small muscles or 10 to 20 pounds for large muscles.

For the first month, lift these weights eight to 12 repetitions (reps) then rest around one minute. After a month, try to do an additional set (lift the weight eight-12 times, rest for one to two minutes, then lift them eight-12 times again). Finally, weight train no more than three times per week and rest at least one day between workouts. And, don't forget to warm up and cool down!

### Benefits of Strength Training

#### Better Bones

Weight-bearing work increases bone density and slows bone loss.

#### Less Pain

Strengthening fights the weakness and pain of aging or arthritic joints.

#### Improved Balance

A stronger frame reduces your risk of falls.

#### Enhanced Metabolism

Lean muscle tissue burns more calories and fat.

## Weight Training Basics

### Warm-up

Always warm your muscles with five minutes of walking, jogging, cycling or on the elliptical machine before lifting any weight. Shoulder shrugs and arm circles are good additional upper-body warm-ups.

### Concentrate

Focus on the muscle(s) you are working to keep your moves safe and effective.

### Start big

Work your large muscle groups (chest, back and legs) first. Finish with your shoulders, arms and smaller muscles.

### Focus on form

Maintain a stable lifting posture throughout every exercise. Move smoothly, avoiding jerky or swinging motions. Choose a weight level that challenges you but allows you to keep perfect form. If you have to drop your weights or let them slam when you're done, you are using too much weight.

### Lift slowly

Speed is OK for high level athletes, but for the average person it is ineffective and risky. Take about two counts (two seconds) to lift the weight and about four counts (four seconds) to release it. A faster lift will transfer the weight from sturdy muscles to vulnerable ligaments and joints.

### Breathe

Many people hold their breath while lifting weights. This is a dangerous mistake; you could get light headed and faint. Plus, you can make your blood pressure go dangerously high. Make sure you exhale through your mouth as you lift and inhale through your nose as you release.

### Advance carefully

As you move up to heavier weights, add only a few pounds at a time. Overloading can lead to injury.