

Understanding Strength Training

Strength training is an activity that builds up your muscles. It is also called resistance training. It can be done with weights, resistance bands, or your own body weight.

Benefits of strength training

Exercise or physical activity —strength training included—can help you feel better and live longer. It can help protect you against many conditions, including cancer, depression, [diabetes](#), osteoporosis, and heart disease. It can help you stay at a [healthy weight](#) or [lose weight](#). It can also ease the symptoms of health problems such as [arthritis](#).

Strength training builds muscle. That's vital as you grow older because you slowly lose muscle mass. As a result, daily activities like carrying a bag of groceries can become hard to do. Strength training can make such tasks easier. It can also keep your bones strong. Plus, it can boost your balance.

Always talk with your healthcare provider before starting any physical activity or strength training.

Tips for strength training

- Talk with your healthcare provider first before starting any new physical activity. That's especially true if you have a chronic health problem such as heart disease or if you haven't exercised for a long time. He or she can help you pick activities that are best for you.
- Do strength training at least 2 times a week. Skip a day between sessions to give your muscles time to recover. Or change the major muscle groups on back-to-back days. Those are your legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms.
- Build up your strength over time. That will help you prevent an injury. Start with a weight that challenges you but that isn't too heavy for you to lift 8 times (repetitions) in a row.
- Control your movements. Lift and lower weights slowly. Don't jerk.
- Remember to breathe. Breathe in as you lift and breathe out as you relax.
- Stop if you feel any pain. It's normal to feel some soreness a day or 2 after exercising.
- See a personal trainer if you haven't exercised before, or have been inactive for a long period of time. A trainer can teach you correct form, keep you motivated, and help you prevent injury.

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