

Strength Training

Benefits of Strength Training

Begin strength training only with the approval of your health care team. Always follow your health care team's instructions for strength training to help avoid injury.

You can choose from several types of strength training: elastic bands, cuff and hand weights, free weights, wall pulleys or weight machines.

Strength training:

- helps you gain muscle strength and tone (making it easier to lift a bag of groceries or pick up a child)
- prevents muscle loss and increases muscle mass (adults lose an average of 6 pounds of muscle each decade)
- increases your metabolic rate
- increases your bone mineral density to help prevent osteoporosis
- improves your glucose metabolism
- reduces your body fat
- increases your gastrointestinal transit time (quicker bowel movement), reducing your risk of colon cancer
- lowers your resting blood pressure
- improves your blood lipid levels
- reduces low back pain
- reduces arthritis pain.

Strength Training Exercises

If your health care team recommends strength training for you, begin with a weight level that lets you repeat a lift or movement 10 to 20 times comfortably.

Do not perform the same strength training exercises (work the same muscle groups) 2 days in a row — give your muscles a day in between to recover.

After a muscle has been stimulated during a workout, it needs time to develop strength — it needs time to recover. Most programs are designed so you can do strength training 3 times each week with 1 day between workouts.

Strength Training Suggestions

- Do not strain. Raise or move weights with slow, controlled movements.
- Always maintain a slight flexion (bend in your elbows or knees). Extending too far wears on your joints and strains your ligaments.
- Exhale (breathe out) during the hard part. When lifting or pushing, blow out. When lowering or releasing, breathe in.
- Try not to grip tightly — it may raise your blood pressure.
- Try to keep your rest periods between each exercise as brief as possible unless otherwise directed by your health care team.
- When you can do so comfortably, increase the weight you lift or resist by 2 to 5 pounds (unless you have a diagnosis of heart failure).

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Some things to remember about your strength training program:

■ **Develop a balanced program.**

There should be balance in your program, making sure not to overdevelop one muscle group while neglecting the opposite muscle group. This means if you work your biceps, you have to work your triceps. Or if you work your back muscles, you have to work your stomach muscles. An imbalance of muscle development adds to the chance of injury to the weaker muscle group.

■ **Exercise large muscle groups** (such as legs, chest, back) **before small muscle groups** (such as arms, abdominals).

■ **Let your body adapt to strength training.**

Do one set of exercises the right way you learned from your health care team. Rest between sets. Do as many sets as your health care team recommends. If you are new to strength training, limit your intensity until your body has time to adapt.

■ **Use slow and controlled movements.**

Raise or move weights with slow controlled movements and do not develop momentum (go faster). Momentum does not develop strength, but it does put a lot of unnecessary stress on tendons, which can cause injury. (Lift for 2 seconds, lower for 4 seconds.)

■ **Use the proper form to avoid injury.**

Ask your health care team for instructions. There is a greater chance of injury if you do not use the right form.

■ **Be sure to breathe during exercise.**

You should exhale during the hard part of the exercise (when lifting or pushing), and inhale during the easy part. Holding your breath while strength training may cause dizziness or other complications.