

# Strength Training 101

**Strength training is one of the four components of a well-rounded exercise routine. When performed correctly, strength training has numerous health and fitness benefits.** This type of exercise contributes to a higher metabolism, builds muscle and bone strength, and increases mobility. Strength training can be performed with or without weights and machines. The three categories of strength training include: free-weight, machine-based, and body weight. Free-weight exercises may require hand weights, dumbbells, medicine balls, resistance bands or household items such as cans and milk containers. Machine-based exercises require gym equipment, and body weight exercises only require resistance from your own weight.

Thinking about adding strength training into your workout? Follow these tips to help you get the most from your exercise.

## Getting Started

**First and foremost, talk to your doctor.** Prior to beginning any exercise routine, it is necessary to determine if you're safe to start and if there are any limitations you should keep in mind.

**Have a plan.** Consider your options and determine which exercises would be best for you. If you are looking to exercise at home, purchase the weights you will need or find household items that will act as weights. If you plan to use machines at a gym, speak with a trainer to learn how to use the equipment and exercises that can be performed on them. Planning to use your own body weight? Review exercises that you feel are within your range of capability and have them ready to go with enough space in which to perform them.

## Working Out

**Choose exercises you will enjoy.** This will help to ensure you stick with the exercise!

**Learn the exercise.** User error contributes to accidents. Take the time to learn and understand the fundamentals of the exercise to perform it correctly.

**Warm up.** Start with 5 to 10 minutes of light cardio such as walking or jogging, followed by stretching.

**Take your time.** Getting started with strength training requires patience. Start slowly and build yourself up to prevent accident or injury. Using lighter weights to start will not hinder progress and is strongly recommended. Maintain a set weight for the first three weeks. For the first week, start with one set consisting of 12 to 15 reps, the second week add another set, and the third week aim for three sets. If you feel comfortable at the end of the three weeks, consider adding additional weight. If you decide to add more weight, work your way back up with the same one set, two set, three set process.

**Rest between sets.** When you are up to multiple sets, take the time to rest. Rest for 1 to 2 minutes for light weights, 2 to 3 minutes for moderate weights and 3 or more minutes for heavier weights.

**Consider frequency.** The American College of Sports Medicine recommends exercising each major muscle group two to three days per week with at least 48 hours between strength training sessions. Following this guideline is critical to injury prevention and reduces the chance of overworking muscles.

**Cool down.** After completing your set(s) perform light cardio for 5 to 10 minutes, followed by stretching.

## Try some of these body weight resistance exercises to start building your strength!

### ✓ Upper Body Exercises

#### Bicep Curl

1. Hold a filled 16 oz water bottle in each hand.
2. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, arms at your sides, palms facing forward.
3. Slowly bend arms and lift water bottles toward your shoulders.
4. Keep wrists straight.
5. Stop when forearms are vertical.
6. Slowly lower and repeat.

#### Wall Push-Up

1. Stand straight, facing the wall, about 2 feet away, palms pressed on the wall a shoulder length apart.
2. Slowly bend arms, pressing body towards the wall, keeping a straight back, until your nose is a few inches from the wall.
3. Hold for 2 seconds before returning to the starting position.
4. Keep both feet planted on the ground or alternate lifting one leg back as you press forward to increase difficulty.

### ✓ Abdominal and Core Exercises

#### Bridge

1. Lie on your back in a bent-knee position with your feet flat on the floor. Place your feet hip-width apart.
2. Exhale while contracting your abdominal muscles and press your hips upwards off the floor by contracting your “glutes” (buttock muscles). Press your heels into the floor for more stability.
3. Avoid pushing your hips too high.
4. Hold for about 15-20 seconds.
5. Inhale and slowly lower yourself back towards your starting position. Repeat 2-3 times.

#### Standing Crunch

1. Stand up straight with feet shoulder-width apart and hands behind your head.
2. Lift your left knee toward your right elbow and twist slightly at the waist (avoid hunching over).
3. Return to the standing position and repeat for the right leg.
4. Try to start with 2 sets of 10 repetitions.

#### Abdominal Curl-Up

1. Lie on the floor with knees bent and feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Place the palms of your hands on your thighs.
3. Lift shoulders off the floor, curling your chest toward your thighs, sliding fingertips toward your knees.
4. Exhale as you lift.
5. Slowly lower, or uncurl your spine back to the starting position.
6. The curl up can be done in a seated position if lying down is difficult.

### ✓ Lower Body Exercises

#### Inner Thigh Abduction

1. Stand up straight with feet shoulder-width apart with one hand resting on a stable chair next to you.
2. Keeping a straight leg, lift the foot furthest from the chair out to the side until it reaches a 45 degree angle from your leg.
3. Lower your foot until just before it touches the floor.
4. Repeat 10-15 times with the same leg, then turn to switch sides to repeat with the other leg.

#### Squat

1. Stand with feet shoulder width apart, arms by your side.
2. Bend your legs at the hip and at the knee as if you are going to sit down in a chair. Extend your arms in front of you to shoulder height.
3. Return to start position.
4. Do 8-10 repetitions.

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