

Maintain Strength for Lifelong Independence

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“Muscle is the key to longevity,” per Dr. Gabrielle Lyon. Muscle strength is what helps you rise from your dining room chair, and take a quick, powerful step to catch yourself if you lose your balance. Muscle mass peaks around age 30 and then gradually declines by 3-8% every decade until age 60 when this rate of loss accelerates. Research shows, however, that older adults can significantly increase strength and build muscle within just a few months of regular resistance training.

Resistance training also has the following benefits:

- Support weight management by increasing metabolism
- Improve blood sugar control to lower the risk of diabetes
- Lower stress by reducing cortisol levels
- Decrease resting blood pressure
- Reduce fat stores which can lower the risk of arterial disease
- Stimulate bone growth to combat osteoporosis
- Decrease the risk of falls and associated injury

Resistance training combined with adequate protein intake is the most effective way to preserve and build muscle as we age. Our bodies become less efficient at using protein over time, therefore there are now recommendations that healthy older adults consume 75-90 grams of protein per day, with

high-quality protein at every meal. Pairing adequate protein with regular resistance training provides the strongest stimulus for maintaining muscle mass and strength.

Here are a few simple, daily tips to build strength and balance at home:

- **Prioritize protein:** Build your meals around a high-quality protein source.
- **Sit-to-stands:** Stand up and sit down 10 times in a row without using your hands if possible. (To increase the challenge: hold a dumbbell or household object)
- **Overhead Lift:** Lift a dumbbell, canned good, or other household item from your waist level to overhead 10 times.
- **Balance:** Stand with your feet together while brushing your teeth. (To increase the challenge: place 1 foot slightly ahead of the other)
- **Walk backward:** In a safe area, while holding onto or staying nearby a sturdy countertop or railing, practice walking backward to improve balance and coordination.

The strongest predictor of whether you can continue doing the things you love isn't your age. It is your strength, and it is never too late to make that a priority. If you are new to resistance training, please seek further guidance from a professional to receive an individualized exercise program tailored to your specific needs and goals. ♦