

New to Lifting at 40+? Your First 4 Weeks of Strength Training, Explained



If you're new to lifting: or returning after a long break: you are in the right place!

Strength training for beginners does not have to mean heavy barbells, complicated routines, or feeling lost in a busy gym.

It can start with a chair, a pair of dumbbells, a resistance band, and a plan that meets you where you are.

For women in their 40s, especially during perimenopause or menopause, resistance training can support muscle, bone health, balance, confidence, energy, and body composition. It can also help you feel more capable in everyday life: from carrying groceries to climbing stairs to getting up and down from the floor.

You do not need to train like anyone else.

You need a starting point that respects your experience, your schedule, your symptoms, and your goals.

Why Strength Training Matters After 40

Hormonal changes during perimenopause and menopause can influence muscle mass, recovery, sleep, energy, and bone health. Strength training is one powerful tool that can help you stay strong and active through these changes.

Regular resistance training may help you:

- Build and maintain lean muscle.
- Support bone strength through progressive loading.
- Improve balance, coordination, and joint stability.

- Make daily tasks feel easier.
- Support a healthy body composition.
- Improve confidence and physical independence.
- Create a foundation for better athletic performance.
- Feel more energized and capable.

This is not about punishing your body or chasing a smaller number on the scale.

It is about taking your health into your own hands and building a body you can rely on!

For more support with menopause symptoms, lifestyle strategies, nutrition, and exercise, explore [Fit-nixx Coaching's menopause coaching services](#).

Before You Begin: Your Strength Training Basics

Aim for **two full-body strength sessions per week** to start.

If you are recovering well and have the time, you can add a third session from Week 3 onward. Leave at least one day between sessions when possible.

Each workout should include:

1. **A warm-up:** 5–10 minutes.
2. **Four to six movement patterns:** 25–45 minutes.
3. **A short cool-down:** breathing and gentle mobility.

Use the “Reps in Reserve” Rule

You should finish most sets feeling like you could complete **two to four more controlled repetitions**.

That means the exercise feels challenging, but you are not grinding, holding your breath, or losing your form.

A simple effort guide:

- **Weeks 1–2:** RPE 5–6 out of 10.
- **Week 3:** RPE 6–7 out of 10.
- **Week 4:** RPE 7–8 out of 10, if your form and recovery are good.

You do not need to train to failure to make progress.

Your Beginner Movement Menu

Use the version that feels safest and most comfortable for you. Bodyweight, dumbbells, bands, machines, and gym equipment can all work!

Movement pattern	Beginner options
Squat	Sit-to-stand, box squat, goblet squat, leg press
Hinge	Hip hinge drill, dumbbell Romanian deadlift, kettlebell deadlift
Push	Wall push-up, incline push-up, dumbbell chest press
Pull	Band row, supported dumbbell row, seated cable row
Single-leg	Supported split squat, step-up, reverse lunge
Core and carry	Dead bug, suitcase carry, bird dog, side plank

Choose one option from each category. There is no prize for choosing the most advanced version!

Your Warm-Up

Complete one or two rounds of:

- 3–5 minutes of easy walking, cycling, or marching.
- 8 bodyweight sit-to-stands.
- 8 hip hinges.
- 8 wall push-ups.
- 8 band pull-aparts or gentle rows.
- 20–30 seconds of relaxed breathing.

Your warm-up should prepare you: not exhaust you.

Week 1: Learn the Movements

Your goal this week is simple: **show up, practise, and build confidence.**

Complete two full-body workouts, such as Monday and Thursday.

Workout A

- Box squat or sit-to-stand: **2 sets of 8–10**
- Dumbbell Romanian deadlift: **2 sets of 8–10**
- Incline push-up or dumbbell chest press: **2 sets of 8–10**
- Supported dumbbell row: **2 sets of 8–10 per side**
- Dead bug: **2 sets of 6–8 per side**

Workout B

- Supported step-up or split squat: **2 sets of 6–8 per side**

- Glute bridge: **2 sets of 10–12**
- Wall push-up or machine chest press: **2 sets of 8–10**
- Band row or lat pulldown: **2 sets of 8–12**
- Suitcase carry: **2 rounds of 20–30 seconds per side**

Rest approximately **60–120 seconds** between sets. Take more time if you need it.

Focus on smooth repetitions, steady breathing, and learning how each movement feels.



Week 2: Build Consistency

This week, repeat the same two workouts.

Familiarity is a feature: not a flaw!

If Week 1 felt manageable and your soreness has settled, progress one small variable:

- Add one or two repetitions per set.
- Add a very small amount of weight.
- Use a slightly more challenging exercise variation.
- Add a third set to one or two exercises.

Do not progress everything at once.

For example, you might move from a bodyweight box squat to a light goblet squat while keeping the same number of sets and repetitions.

Your target is generally **2–3 sets of 8–12 repetitions** for most exercises.

Week 3: Add a Third Session If You're Ready

You can continue with two sessions this week. That is completely fine!

If you are recovering well, add an optional third full-body session. Keep it shorter and lighter than your other workouts.

Optional Workout C

Complete two rounds:

- Sit-to-stand or goblet squat: **8–10 reps**
- Dumbbell deadlift: **8–10 reps**
- Incline push-up: **8–10 reps**
- Band row: **10–12 reps**
- Farmer carry: **30–40 seconds**
- Bird dog: **6–8 per side**

Rest as needed. This session should leave you feeling worked: not wiped out.

For your main two sessions, aim for **2–3 sets** and continue using the effort guide. You should still have approximately two good repetitions in reserve when you finish each set.



Week 4: Practise Progression

By Week 4, you may feel more coordinated and confident.

That does not mean you need to make a dramatic jump.

Progress gradually by choosing **one** of these options:

- Add 2–5 pounds to a dumbbell movement.
- Add one repetition to each set.
- Add one set to a key exercise.
- Move from a supported version to a less-supported version.
- Slow down the lowering phase of each repetition.

Keep your form controlled.

For your two or three workouts, use:

- Main lower-body movements: **3 sets of 8–10**
- Upper-body push and pull movements: **2–3 sets of 8–12**
- Core or carry work: **2–3 rounds**
- Rest: **1–2 minutes**, or longer for demanding movements

At the end of Week 4, assess how you feel. Are you recovering well? Do you feel stronger? Are the exercises becoming easier to understand?

Those are meaningful wins!

Form and Safety Reminders

Good form is not about looking perfect. It is about controlling the movement and choosing an appropriate challenge.

Remember to:

- Keep your feet stable and your joints aligned.
- Move through a comfortable range of motion.
- Breathe continuously. Avoid holding your breath.
- Stop a set when your technique starts to change.
- Keep weights close to your body during deadlifts and carries.
- Use support for balance when performing split squats or step-ups.
- Choose a lighter load if you feel unsure.
- Keep at least 24–48 hours between full-body sessions.

Muscle soreness can happen, especially when returning to exercise. Gentle walking, hydration, adequate food, sleep, and light mobility may help.

You do not need to “push through” severe soreness. If you are still very sore, reduce the volume or take another recovery day.

Sharp pain, sudden pain, joint swelling, numbness, dizziness, chest pain, or pain that changes your movement is different from normal training discomfort. Stop and seek appropriate medical guidance.

If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, a significant injury, uncontrolled blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, pelvic floor concerns, or another medical condition, speak with your healthcare provider before beginning or changing your training.

You may also benefit from working with a qualified professional who can adjust exercise selection, loading, range of motion, and technique for you.

Your Starting Point Does Not Need to Look Like Anyone Else's

There is no single perfect program for all women.

Your sleep, stress, menopause symptoms, injury history, training experience, equipment, and schedule all matter. A plan that works for one person may not be the right fit for another.

That is why customized workout plans can be so valuable.

At Fitnixx Coaching, we provide individualized training in a private, supportive garage gym in Bowmanville. All fitness levels and starting points are welcome!

We combine personalized programming, coaching, nutrition support, and lifestyle strategies so you can make progress with confidence: not confusion.

Looking for a personal trainer Bowmanville women can feel comfortable with? [Learn more about Fitnixx personal training.](#)



Ready to Start Lifting?

Start small.

Choose two days.

Learn the movements.

Track your progress.

Adjust when your body needs you to.

Strength training for women over 40 is not about proving how much you can lift on Day 1. It is about building a sustainable practice that supports the life you want to live.

Book your free consultation with Fitnixx Coaching and let's create your next step together!

[Book your free consultation](#)

Further Reading

- [Fitnixx Coaching menopause blogs](#)
- [Stanford Lifestyle Medicine: Strength Training During Perimenopause](#)
- [Nuffield Health: Full-Body Exercises for Perimenopause](#)
- [University of Miami Health: Exercising During Perimenopause and Menopause](#)