

# Strength Training

## Incredible Benefits for the Body, Mind and Soul

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What if someone told you about a pill you could take to make you feel better, laugh more and enjoy life with renewed vigor? And what if that pill could lessen the symptoms of your arthritis, diabetes or depression? Better yet, what if that pill were free? Such a pill does exist — it's called exercise. Exercise and staying active can do more for us than we ever imagined, especially if we already have limitations due to disease.

### Strength Training

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Tufts University recently completed a strength-training program comprised of older men and women with moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis. The results of their 16-week program showed that strength training decreased pain by 43 percent, increased muscle strength and general physical performance, improved the clinical signs and symptoms of the disease, and decreased disability. The effectiveness of strength training to ease the pain of osteoarthritis was just as potent, if not more potent, as medications. Similar effects of strength training have been seen in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Strength training can also be effective in reducing the signs and symptoms of numerous diseases and chronic conditions like arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, back pain and depression.

"The stronger your body, the better quality of life you'll have," says Joe Hockensmith, Certified Personal Trainer, Eisenhower Renker Wellness Center. "People who are sedentary struggle with basic activities like getting up from a chair, walking and lifting."



### Strength Training Options

Free weights, resistance bands, yoga, circuit machines and medicine balls are all good strength training options. Any type of resistance training gives the muscles something to work against, resulting in stronger muscles. Strengthening the muscles with resistance greater than what they're used to makes them able to do more in everyday activities.

Whenever possible, vary routines to keep them interesting and to engage more muscles throughout the body. At the end of a workout, allow plenty of time for slow stretching.

"The more lean mass you have in the body, the more calories are burned at rest," reminds Hockensmith. "You'll also burn more calories during exercise. And strength training keeps bones, ligaments and tendons stronger."

### Classes, Trainers and Home Workouts

For those without experience in using free weights or weight circuit machines, gyms are a good place to get instruction. Hiring a certified personal trainer for even one or two sessions can provide instruction on how to properly use weights. Before starting any new exercise regimen, check with your physician, especially if you have any health

issues or restrictions.

Many gyms offer classes that incorporate strength training. Or, if you prefer to exercise at home, using smaller weights with more repetitions can be more effective than using heavier weights for a shorter number of repetitions. Be mindful of maintaining correct posture and engage your core muscles throughout your exercise routine.