



The Power of Strength Training for Older Adults

Over the years, our bodies slowly begin to age, our bones become weaker, muscle mass decreases and we lose strength. This loss in muscle mass can cause many difficulties in an individual's life and may affect one's ability to live independently. A loss of leg and back strength in older adults not only impairs walking but is also associated with increased risk of falling. Older adults may also lose the ability to carry on with favourite activities like walking or dancing. But there is good news. No matter your age, size or ability you can build strength! ¹

What is Strength Training?

This includes activities such as resistance training, weight training, and muscle building activity. Strength training uses muscle contractions against a resistance force that makes the muscles work a little harder, which in turn will help them become stronger.¹

Older adults who do strength training will improve or maintain their muscle mass, strength and balance. Muscle strength is important for all individuals, but becomes even more important as individuals age. ¹

Examples of Strength Training

- Use of resistance bands (theraband or tubing)
- Weight training—free weights, weight equipment
- Bicep curls for the arms
- Bench presses for the chest
- Carrying your groceries or other heavy objects ¹
- Strap on sand bags to your ankles or wrists to get a little more resistance when walking or jogging



Benefits of Strength Training

Strength training improves balance and reduces the risk for falls. It strengthens our muscles and bones, improves function and independence, and modifies risk factors for cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes.¹ Strength training also reduces the signs and symptoms of other diseases and chronic conditions, such as arthritis, osteoporosis, obesity, back pain and depression.²

Who Offers Strength Training Classes?

Strength training classes are offered at community leisure facilities, YMCA/ YWCA, fitness clubs, senior centers or Universities. If you are unsure that you will enjoy strength training classes, sit in and watch the program for one day, then make your decision. Chances are you will enjoy it.



Consult with an exercise or health care professional to design a program that is right for you.



For more information and resources contact **in motion** (306)655-Do It or visit the **in motion** website www.in-motion.ca.

References

1. Miller, C. (2004). *Nursing for wellness in older adults: theory and practice* (4th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2007). *Growing Stronger: Strength Training for Older Adults*. Retrieved March 19, 2008 from http://www.cdc.gov/nccphp/dnpa/physiacl/growing_stronger/why.htm
3. Active Living Coalition for Older Adults. (2002). *Research Update: The Power of Strength Training for Older Adults*. Retrieved March 19, 2008 from http://www.alcoa.ca/research_u_docs/2002_03mar_en_update.pdf