

# From Ronda's Front Porch to Yours

## Ronda White

### Strength Training: Is it Necessary?

By now we know that a healthy diet and exercise go hand in hand in losing weight. We also know that exercise is an important key in shedding those extra pounds. Whether you are just starting out with an exercise routine or you have been hitting the gym for a while, you might want to consider adding strength training to your weekly routine.

Strength training is an important part of a fitness program that includes aerobic activity and flexibility exercises. It is any physical activity that causes the muscles to work against an additional force or weight.

There are two types of strength training. Isotonic exercise involves any movement of your muscle groups (legs, arms, stomach, back, etc.) against some type of resistance. Types of isotonic exercise include lifting barbells dumbbells, exercise using resistance bands, or body weight exercises including push-ups and sit-ups.

Isometric exercises do not involve movement of the joint itself but instead the muscle group is held still in place against the resistance. These exercises include plank holds, wall sits, holding grocery bags, etc.

Why is strength training important? With most forms of traditional steady-state cardio, you expend calories while you're exercising. Once you stop, you quickly go back to your normal metabolic rate. Strength training, however, builds muscle, and more muscle helps you burn more calories. The more muscle you have the more fuel you're constantly burning.

According to the Mayo Clinic, lean muscle mass naturally diminishes with age. You will increase the percentage of fat in your body if you don't do anything to replace the lean muscle you lose over time. Strength training can help you preserve and enhance your muscle mass at any age.

Strength training can also help you:

- Develop strong bones. By stressing your bones, strength training can increase bone density and reduce the risk of osteoporosis.
- Manage your weight. Strength training can help you manage or lose weight and can increase your metabolism to help you burn more calories.
- Enhance your quality of life. Strength training may enhance your quality of life and improve your ability to do everyday activities. Building muscle also can contribute to better balance and may reduce your risk of falls. This can help you maintain independence as you age.

- Manage chronic conditions. Strength training can reduce the signs and symptoms of many chronic conditions such as arthritis, back pain, obesity, heart disease, depression and diabetes.
- Sharpen your thinking skills. Some research suggests that regular strength training and aerobic exercise may help improve thinking and learning skills for older adults.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends adults participate in moderate or high intensity resistance training two or more days a week. Older or sedentary individuals need to begin at a very light to light intensity. Novice to intermediate individuals need moderate to hard intensity. Experienced individuals need hard to hard intensity.

For strength improvement for middle age and older adults beginning a resistance program, perform 8-12 repetitions for 2-4 sets. More frail adults perform 10-15 repetitions for 1 set. Bone strengthening requires 6-8 sets or 1-3 sets. To achieve endurance improvement complete 15-20 repetitions for 1-2 sets.

Start out with the lowest weight or resistance possible until you are comfortable with the machine and correct movement. As you gain strength increase weight or resistance and repetitions.

To reduce risk of injury learn the proper techniques of each exercise and consult your physician if you have health conditions to make sure it is safe to begin a strength training routine.

Resource: The Mayo Clinic, [www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com), Arizona Cooperative Extension

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