

12 Healthy Habits

Habit 8: Get Stronger

A YEAR OF BUILDING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

BENEFITS:

- **Increases flexibility and balance which decreases the likelihood and severity of falls**
- **Increases bone density which reduces the risk for fractures**
- **Helps to control weight by increasing the metabolic rate by up to 15%**
- **Helps improve blood glucose levels**

GOAL:

- **Perform strength training exercises at least 2 times per week**

Adapted from *Cooking Light Magazine*

Rev Up Your Metabolism with Muscle

Strength training can be intimidating. We walk into the gym and see a profusion of machines or a rack of weights and mirrored walls and wonder where to begin.

The truth is that strength training can be simple. It can be done at home, at work, in a hotel room or at the gym. Strength training is defined as the use of resistance to build muscle size and strength. The resistance can be weights, bands, or even your own body weight..

Most of us are not interested in building massive muscles like a body builder, but adding strength training as a regular part of your routine can be powerful in reducing the symptoms of numerous conditions including arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis, back pain and depression.

A major benefit of strength training is its effect on weight control. Individuals who have more muscle mass have a higher metabolic rate. Muscle is active tissue that consumes calories while stored fat uses very little energy. So its not only beneficial while you are exercising but the benefits continue.

While strength training is generally safe, even for people with health conditions, make sure you check with your doctor before beginning a new routine. Health and Human Services guidelines suggest strength training on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms). Be sure to give your muscles at least one day of rest between workouts (you may want

to do aerobic exercise on the days between!).

As you begin your routine, you should be able to do 2 sets of 10 repetitions of each exercise with moderate difficulty and a 1-2 minute break between the sets. Progression is important for the full benefits of strength training. You need to consistently advance the intensity of your workout by challenging your muscles with heavier weights. If you can do more than 12 repetitions in good form, increase the weight. As you progress you will start to see the benefits and have a tremendous sense of pride and accomplishment.

