

STRENGTH TRAINING FOR WOMEN:

*A Key to Lasting
Weight Loss
& Overall Health*



WHY STRENGTH TRAINING IS A GAME CHANGER FOR WOMEN

There are many benefits of strength training, some as simple as being able to pick up your grandchildren or carry in the groceries. When it comes to weight loss, however, strength training plays a significant role that is often overlooked. Evidence shows that, compared with cardio alone, women who engage in at least 2–3 strength training sessions per week lose more body fat while maintaining or gaining lean muscle.

(References: American College of Sports Medicine; Schoenfeld BJ et al., *Sports Medicine*, 2021)

LET'S BREAK THIS DOWN:

- 1 Boosts Metabolism:** Muscle is a calorie-burning powerhouse. At rest, muscle tissue uses about three times more energy (calories) than fat, so the more muscle you have, the more calories burned - day and night. Strength training not only builds lean, active tissue, but it also turns up your metabolism during workouts and keeps it elevated for hours after. This “afterburn” effect lasts longer than with steady-state cardio, so you continue burning calories after you’ve put down the weights.
- 2 Preserves Lean Muscle During Weight Loss:** There is evidence to show that about 20 - 30% of weight loss when dieting alone is muscle loss. That’s a concerning percentage - especially when you add the fact that women tend to have a lower percentage of muscle to begin with. We lose 3 - 8 % naturally each decade after 30, and perimenopause and menopause escalate muscle loss even more. So, with dieting alone, the scale may drop — but it’s not the kind of weight you want to lose. Remember, less muscle means a lower metabolism, making it harder to keep the weight off and increasing the risk of regaining even more than you lost. Strength training helps preserve your existing muscle during weight loss and helps build new lean muscle, keeping your metabolism higher and making your weight-loss results more sustainable.
- 3 Supports Hormonal Health:** Strength training is one of the best tools women have for hormone balance — especially when looking to lose weight. It helps regulate hunger and fullness signals and supports healthy levels of estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and cortisol, which all play a significant role in metabolism, mood, and ultimately weight control. Plus, strength training boosts insulin sensitivity and can help reduce belly fat, which is especially valuable during peri- and menopause.

Strength training offers many other benefits—better mobility, improved mood and confidence, and support for conditions like osteoporosis and arthritis. Some women avoid it out of fear of “bulking up,” but building large amounts of muscle requires years of intense, specialized training. Strength training won’t make you look bulky; it will help you feel stronger, leaner, and more capable. My take: let’s try it and see how great you feel!

GETTING STARTED AT HOME

You don't need a gym — just a pair of dumbbells or resistance bands.

HOW OFTEN TO TRAIN

2-3 sessions per week, with at least one rest day in between.

GOAL

Complete each exercise with proper form, aiming for 8-12 reps, 2-3 sets, and resting 30-60 seconds between sets. 12 repetitions should be the most you do. Lifting heavier for 8 - 12 reps (versus lighter for more than 12 reps) is better for helping to build or maintain muscle.

UNDERSTANDING SETS & REPETITIONS (REPS)

A **repetition (rep)** is **one** full movement of an exercise.

Example: Lower into a squat + stand back up = 1 rep

A **set** is a **group** of repetitions done in a row.

Example: 10 squats in a row = 1 set

If all the reps feel easy → increase resistance slightly.

If you struggle to finish → use lighter resistance, or do fewer reps.

HOW HARD SHOULD IT FEEL?

Use a 1-10 effort scale (1 = very easy, 10 = impossible). Aim for a **7-8**. You should feel focused and working, and the **last 2 reps should be challenging**. If they're easy, it's time to increase the weight. This is key to help you progress!

CHOOSING YOUR STARTING WEIGHT

Begin with bodyweight or a light weight so you can learn the movement with good form.

Once it feels comfortable, gradually increase the weight so you're lifting as heavy as you can for **8-12 reps** with good technique.



YOUR BEGINNER FULL-BODY HOME STRENGTH PROGRAM

Complete each exercise in order. Start with **1-2 sets** your first week, then move to **2-3 sets**.

WARM UP

- ① Standing or seated march or gentle walk: **1 min**
- ② Shoulder rolls: **10 - 15 reps**
- ③ Arm circles: **10 - 15 reps**
- ④ Standing or seated heel lifts: **10 - 15 reps**

STRENGTH ROUTINE



DEADBUG

(Lower Abs & Core / Spine Support)

- ① Lie on your back, knees bent to 90°, arms up toward the ceiling.
- ② Slowly extend one leg and the opposite arm away from your body.
- ③ Keep your back gently pressed into the floor to avoid arching.
- ④ Return to start and switch sides.

Modification: If you feel your low back lifting off the floor as you lower your leg, you are working too hard. Keep your knees bent and tap your heel to the floor instead of lowering a straight leg.

8-12 reps per side



BANDED OVERHEAD LAT PULL-DOWN (Upper Back & Posture)

- 1 Hold a band overhead in both hands about shoulder width apart.
- 2 Pull your elbows down toward your ribs, imagining “putting your shoulder blades in your back pockets.”
- 3 Slowly release back to the starting position.

Modification: The further apart you hold your hands, the easier it will be, as the tension on the band will be less.

8-12 reps

ROWS (Choose 1, not both)



SEATED BAND ROW

(Back & Posture)

- 1 Sit tall with legs extended (or knees bent for comfort).
- 2 Loop band around feet.
- 3 Pull hands toward your rib cage, squeezing shoulder blades back.

8-12 reps



SPLIT-STANCE ROW

(Back & Core)

- 1 Use a dumbbell or resistance band.
- 2 Step one foot forward and hinge slightly at the hips.
- 3 Pull the weight/band toward your ribs, keeping your elbow close.
- 4 Pause, then slowly lower.

8-12 reps per arm



GLUTE BRIDGE (Glutes & Hamstrings)

- 1 Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat.
- 2 Press through your heels and lift your hips.
- 3 Squeeze your glutes at the top.
- 4 Lower slowly.

8-12 reps

To progress: Place a weight or folded heavy book on your hips, or put a band across your hips and anchor it down with your hands.



BODYWEIGHT BOX SQUAT (Legs & Glutes)

- 1 Stand in front of a chair or box.
- 2 Sit back and down, lightly touch the seat.
- 3 Stand up by pressing through your heels.

8-12 reps

To progress: Hold a dumbbell at your chest or stand on a band with both feet holding the band in your hands at your sides, or for a harder version at your shoulders.



SEATED BAND OR DUMBBELL SHOULDER PRESS

(Shoulders & Upper Back)

- 1 Sit tall, core engaged.
- 2 Press your weight/band overhead.
- 3 Lower slowly to shoulder level.

8-12 reps



WALL PUSH-UPS *(Chest, Arms & Core)*

- 1 Stand facing a wall, hands shoulder-height.
- 2 Lean in toward the wall by bending elbows.
- 3 Push away to return.

8-12 reps

To progress: Move feet further back.

Please consult with a doctor before starting any new exercise program to find out if it's right for you.