



DAY 05 - STRENGTH CHALLENGE

LIVE THE FLOURISHING LIFE: FLOURISHING FITNESS

Strength training is about much more than just bulking up. Whether you use free weights, a machine, a resistance band or simply your own body weight, strengthening your muscles is an important part of any fitness regimen.

STRENGTH & HEALTH

We've already discussed the health benefits of exercise in general on day three of this challenge, but strength training has some specific, unique advantages for your body. Any exercise helps to manage your blood pressure, blood sugar and blood cholesterol levels. But muscle strengthening is particularly effective, and it can help prevent and control conditions such as heart disease and type two diabetes. For patients with diabetes, it has been suggested as a strategy for moderating glucose levels. Greater muscular strength has even been associated with lower cancer mortality risks. Along with muscle mass, strength training improves bone mass—both of which are particularly important as you age. Your bone mass decreases 1% each year after the age of 40, and muscle mass decreases 3-5% per decade after the age of 30. Insufficient bone and muscle mass both lead to reduced mobility and an increased risk of falls and fractures.

STRENGTH & WEIGHT

If you're trying to lose weight, you might think that aerobic exercise is far more important than strength training—but this isn't the case. In one study, some participants did only cardio exercise, some did only weights and some did a combination. Those that did half cardio and half weights had the best outcomes in body composition as they lost weight while gaining muscle. Losing weight includes losing both fat and muscle, so you need to actively work on your muscles if you don't want them to deteriorate. If you incorporate strength training into your fitness regimen, you'll lose fat and gain lean muscle. Strength training is not only essential for your muscles; it even helps you burn calories. While cardio does burn more calories as you exercise, strength training provides a temporary boost to your metabolism which means you burn more calories for as much as 38 hours after your workout.

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Having more muscle mass also improves your resting metabolism, meaning a permanent increase in the number of calories you burn.

GETTING STARTED WITH STRENGTH TRAINING

Whatever your health goals are, you'll benefit from working your muscles at least twice a week, as is recommended. Here are some helpful tips for beginners to get you started:

- Make sure you warm up first. Try five minutes of light aerobic exercise and some dynamic stretching with slow, controlled movement.
- Choose 8-10 exercises to start with—preferably a range that will work your whole body. Find some great no-equipment exercises here.
- Start by performing 1 set of 8 repetitions of each exercise.
- Once you can comfortably complete 12 repetitions in a set, gradually increase to 2 and then 3 sets for each exercise.
- For more guidance and motivation, try a class at your local gym, some free workouts on youtube or a workout app.