

STRENGTH TRAINING AS WE GROW OLDER

April Challenge

When you think of strength training, it's only natural to think of Arnold Swarzenegger. Strength training (or weight training) is for athletes and bodybuilders. Right?



Strength training does improve athletic performance and was clearly a part of Arnold's bodybuilding workouts.

BUT strength training is essential for **EVERYONE**, especially as we grow older.

Last month, you engaged in brisk walking through our 30-Day Walking Challenge. Brisk walking is strength training for the heart. After all, your heart is a muscle. As you walk, your heart rate increases, challenging the heart to work harder. As it works harder, it grows stronger. The same principle applies to all of our muscles - legs, back, shoulders, arms. As these muscles work harder, they grow stronger.

Let's consider the benefits of strength training.

We actually start losing muscle mass before the age of 40. If we don't engage in strength training, our muscles become increasingly weaker as we age. This puts us at greater risk for injury and falls as our balance diminishes. We may become fatigued climbing stairs, struggle getting out of the bathtub or rising from the toilet, and even struggle holding our grandchildren or carrying our groceries. We have come to believe it is a part of growing older. But it doesn't have to be. Research shows that even adding some strength training late in life can have significant benefits to balance and in maintaining independence in daily living.

Does strength training mean lifting weights?

Remember, the goal is to make your muscles work harder. That means adding some resistance to our movement. Resistance may mean lifting weights, water bottles, soup cans or using exercise bands. Resistance can be in the form of lifting your own body weight, such as going from sitting to standing. These are called sit-to-stands. For those new to strength training, beginning with very light weights or water bottles is a great place to start. For those experienced in strength training, they may need to lift heavier weights to gain benefits.



So, what is the Strength Training Challenge?

1. For the month of April, commit to strength training exercises 2x per week. For those already engaged in some strength training exercises, commit to 3x per week, which is the recommended frequency for optimal results. The Ladder provides opportunities for you to do this.
2. The eight exercises on the attached sheet are a great place to begin. Try to do each exercise 12-15 times (repetitions). 12-15 repetitions is called one set. Work up to doing two sets of each exercise. If you find completing two sets is relatively easy, consider using a heavier weight next time.
3. If you would rather do balance and strength training exercises in a group, join us at The Ladder for Fun and Functional Fitness - Tuesdays at 1:00 pm and Thursdays at 9:45 am. Each class combines exercises that strengthen your heart, along with exercises that strengthen your legs, arms, shoulders, and back. The classes last 40-45 minutes. You can choose to do the exercises seated or standing.
4. Finally, if you would like some help learning the attached exercises, join us from 12:30-1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays during the month of April. We will walk through the exercises together, trying them with hand weights and resistance bands. We can add a few balance exercises for those who are interested. This is a good time to find the exercises that work best for you!

The reward for taking on the challenge?

- You have better balance!
- You say “Yes” to doing things to which you may have previously said “No.”
- You are stronger!

Let us know how this challenge has helped you. You can email Sue Beckman at sue@theladdercommunitycenter.com to share your success.

No matter your age or fitness level, strength training can have a profound impact on daily living. Take a step today toward greater health!