

What Strength Equipment Is Best For You?

CONSIDER:

- What are your fitness goals?
- What are your current strength training options or habits?
- Have you used any type of strength training equipment in the past?
- If so, what did you like or dislike?
- Do you have access to credible information regarding appropriate resistance exercises?
- What type of space do you have available for equipment?
- Do you have any physical limitations, injuries, or concerns that may be improved or aggravated by specific activities?



Strength

Physical strength is a necessary and effective component of functional fitness for people of all ages. When appropriate levels of muscular strength are maintained, physically demanding tasks as well as everyday activities are performed with less effort. Resistance training improves muscle tone, shapes the body, supports good posture, and increases strength and bone density.

One of the less obvious benefits of strength training, is the significant role it can play in maintaining desired body weight. Because resistance exercises build lean body mass (muscle), your metabolic rate is increased, meaning your body expends (burns) more calories even when at rest. Body fat however, can not be converted into muscle. These are two separate and distinct tissues that do not have the capacity to change from one to the other.

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Understanding the FITT Principle

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends following the **FITT** principle to maintain a healthy level of muscular strength:

Frequency

Exercise 2 to 3 days each week.

Generally, strength training workouts should be performed on non-consecutive days to allow for 48 hours rest between exercise sessions involving the same muscle groups. Some advanced routines allow for more frequent training by designing workouts based on specific muscle groups (i.e.; upper body one day and lower body the next).

Intensity

1 to 3 sets of 8 to 15 repetitions.



The majority of benefits associated with a resistance-training program can be realized by performing one set. Although additional sets are certainly beneficial and will enhance results, the greatest return on time invested occurs when each exercise in the initial set is performed to the point of failure. Understanding this “overload principle” is essential to ensure continued progress, regardless of your strength goals.

The “overload principle” suggests that; in order for adaptation (change) to occur, the muscle must be challenged to perform more work than it is accustomed to performing.

In other words, the amount of resistance, number of repetitions, number of sets, and length of rest between exercises must be constantly manipulated to provide a sufficient level of difficulty.

If absolute strength, or the ability to exert a brief maximal effort, is the goal, fewer repetitions (8-10) should be completed with heavy resistance. If dynamic strength or muscular endurance is the goal, more repetitions (12-15) should be completed with less resistance.

Time

Slow and controlled movement throughout range of motion.

Proper form is paramount when executing strength exercises to avoid injury and maximize results. Two common mistakes individuals often make when resistance training, are performing the exercise movement too quickly and sacrificing technique in order to increase resistance. Best results are achieved by visualizing the specific muscle(s) being worked, pausing briefly at the point of maximal contraction, and moving smoothly through both the ascending and descending portions of each exercise.

Type

8 to 10 exercises targeting major muscle groups.

Strength training is a very “specific” activity. Performing exercises that work the biceps for example, will result in development of the bicep muscle and supporting structures. Therefore, it is important to follow a well rounded exercise routine that focuses on challenging all the major muscle groups. Working one muscle group at the exclusion of another (such as the biceps and not the triceps) will eventually cause a muscular imbalance that could lead to injury. Exercises that strengthen the body’s “core” which includes the upper and lower back, chest, abdominal, hips, and buttocks should be a priority.

Consult a reliable source, such as your Fitness Advisor to determine the most appropriate exercises for your strength program.

