

# How Becoming Strong Could be The Key to Feeling Your Very Best!



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## Why Train for Strength?

There is huge media coverage on why we should all be lifting weights as we age and how the benefits of strength training can change our health and lives forever.

Despite this information overload, most women haven't yet started and many do not know where to start! Perhaps they don't like the idea of joining a gym or feel that it's 'not for them' as they see lithe celebrities jumping and flying around with high intensity routines.

Building strength does not need to involve fast, loud, high intensity 'boot camp' routines or even setting foot inside a gym! Strength training can be performed in a controlled manner with a focus on moving your body through functional movements and using the full range of motion. Your bodyweight can provide sufficient resistance as you learn how to exercise for strength. In fact, it is all you need as you progress too if you enjoy callisthenics (see [www.schoolofcalisthenics.com](http://www.schoolofcalisthenics.com)). Weights can be used and increased very gradually as you become stronger to allow your body to adapt and avoid injury.

The key to building strength is to progressively challenge or overload your muscles over time. This provides the neuromuscular systems of the body with the stimulus to adapt and

become stronger. The great news is, as a beginner, you will experience the resulting strength gains very quickly - faster than you ever will again - provided you combine consistent progressive training with the nourishment your body needs.

### **So, what are the benefits of strength training?**

- It sends a strong signal to the body to build and maintain muscle which offsets the muscle loss we all experience as we age
- It puts an end to yo-yo dieting - the stronger you get, the more energy (food!) your body needs. Conversely, if you restrict calories and focus on cardio, you need to eat fewer and fewer calories over time as you become smaller and lose muscle along with body fat
- It increases bone density
- A muscular body burns body fat as fuel
- It help to relieve stress which can severely affect fat loss
- It improves flexibility and mobility
- Trained, developed muscles result in a lean, toned body as body fat reduces
- It boosts sleep quality
- It helps protect against Heart Disease
- It reduces the risk of all kinds of injury
- It reduces the risk of Type 2 Diabetes and other chronic diseases
- It makes you feel more energetic and athletic
- It enhances overall fitness

### **How much training do you need to do and which exercises are important?**

Most beginners to strength training will find that exercising each muscle group twice per week will produce optimal results. So, two full body workouts with rest days in between should be sufficient to enable sufficient recovery. Depending on time available for each session, some people prefer to split up their workouts so may prefer a day prioritising lower body followed by a focus on upper body. It is important to give your body time to recover and avoid injury so ensure your programme is designed carefully to avoid overtraining and exhaustion.

There are almost unlimited combinations of exercises which can strengthen our bodies but compound movements elicit the greatest muscle fibre recruitment and therefore can optimise training time. These are the ones which involve multiple joints such as squats (hip and knee), push-ups (shoulder, elbow, wrist) and deadlifts (hips, knees and ankles). It is important to combine pulling and pushing exercises to ensure muscle groups are balanced to avoid injury over time.

As a beginner, it is most important to learn how to perform resistance exercises optimally and practise proper form to enable your body to become strong and flexible enough to progress and add weight only when ready.

An initial exercise programme for a beginner might include:



- Variations of bodyweight-only and single-leg / split squats
- Multi-plane lunges
- Push-ups from a kneeling position or onto a raised surface
- Overhead pressing and lateral raises holding a can or bottle
- Priming exercises such as good mornings to increase flexibility of the hamstrings & glutes and neutral back positioning for progression into safe deadlifting in future
- Bent over rowing using household items as weights
- Dips using a chair or bench at home
- Isometric core strengthening exercises such as plank variations
- Spinal rotation and strengthening exercises such as the windmill
- Glute bridges and donkey kicks to isolate and fire the large glute muscles - strengthening the glutes can prevent and improve problems such as lower back and knee pain which can often be caused by the body's compensation for weak glutes
- Air swimming - strengthens the postural muscles which can prevent injury
- Single leg deadlifts using food cans to start
- Compound exercises such as squat to push or lunge to biceps curls with food cans

With the addition of at-home gym equipment, there are many more variations and opportunities to progress the exercises as you become stronger. Examples of cost-effective and versatile tools for strength training include:

- Pull-up bar - fantastic for pulling exercises to build upper body and core strength
- Daily hanging alone can provide enormous benefit for shoulder health with progressions for leg lifting exercises and pulling over time
- Resistance bands - many exercises can mimic gym-based resistance machines using bands instead and they can be useful for pulling which is difficult without equipment
- Kettlebells - there are numerous exercises using kettlebells which can build fantastic strength and also improve muscular endurance and cardiovascular fitness such as the kettlebell swing. Many traditional dumbbell exercises can be performed with kettlebells
- Dumbbells
- Medicine and gym balls
- Yoga mat for floor based exercises

Many people are unsure whether they should prioritise weight loss before embarking on a strength training programme. Glowing strong can discuss your current nutrition, health and lifestyle factors in order to help you to achieve your goals in the best way for you - whatever your starting point. It is never too late to start prioritising your health and wellbeing and you will be delighted you did!

#### How Glowing Strong can help you:

- **Personal Training to include: workout plan; teaching and demonstration of strength exercises including bodyweight-only resistance training; options using basic equipment.**

**These exercises can be designed for complete beginners to learn safely in your own home and progress at your own pace. Technique can be observed and optimal form / suggestions for progression taught using Zoom or Facetime.**

- **Nutritional coaching to include: analysis of and advice on current dietary habits and preferences; suggested improvements; macronutrient advice for health, fitness and body composition goals; ideas on meal planning and dietary strategies including eating out; food preparation within budgetary, time and family constraints.**