

MAINTAIN STRENGTH AS YOU AGE

It's normal for muscle mass to decrease as we age but strength-building exercise and diet can minimise this loss to help us keep living and enjoying life in the way we envisage.

Benefits of strength training

- Prevents falls by improving balance and coordination.
- Enhances mobility and flexibility.
- Supports bone health, reducing the risk of osteoporosis.

How much strength training should I do?

According to the Australian Physical Activity Guidelines, adults 18 to 64 should:

- Engage in muscle-strengthening activities on at least two days each week.
- Include exercises that target all major muscle groups, such as legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms.



Strength-building exercises to try

Gym weights are great, but they're not the only way to increase strength. In fact, any kind of resistance training where you work against a weight or force will help maintain and build muscle. You could try:

1. Bodyweight exercises

- Squats or lunges
- Push-ups against a wall or bench
- Calf raises.

2. Functional movements

Daily tasks that make your muscles work a bit harder, like carrying heavy grocery bags, slowly sitting and standing from a chair, or heavy gardening tasks like digging.

3. Yoga, Pilates, and Tai Chi

Improve strength, flexibility, and balance through poses and movements that engage various muscle groups.

4. Resistance bands

Lightweight and portable, resistance bands can be used for exercises like bicep curls, overhead raises, and side and front raises.

5. Water aerobics

Water provides resistance and also supports the joints, ideal for older adults or those with joint pain.

The role of diet in muscle maintenance

To effectively maintain muscle mass, consume high-quality sources of protein at each meal. Our bodies absorb protein best when it's spread evenly across the day, rather than eating a large amount all in one go.

Importance of protein:

- Protein serves as the building block for muscles, essential for repair and growth.
- Adequate protein intake supports muscle preservation, especially as we age.

High-quality protein sources:

- Animal-based: lean meats (beef, pork, lamb, chicken), fish, eggs, dairy products.
- Plant-based: lentils, chickpeas, beans, tofu, nuts.



Incorporating strength-building exercise and a protein-rich diet into your routine can help reduce muscle mass decline, enhance your quality of life, and ensure independence as you age.

Get Active Victoria offers strength-based workout videos suitable for beginners that you can do in your own home. To access the videos, login to your account or join Get Active Victoria.

If you have any concerns or questions about your health before undertaking any physical activity, please consult with a physician or health-care professional first.

Sources

Better Health Channel, *Protein*, State Government of Victoria, accessed 9 August 2024 (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/protein)

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Department of Health and Aged Care, *For adults (18 to 64 years)*, Australian Government, accessed 9 August 2024 (www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-adults-18-to-64-years)

