

Strength training and health

Maintaining strong muscles is crucial for optimal health, especially as we age, and the risk of bone loss, soft tissue injury and fractures increases. Strength or resistance training is any form of exercise that uses weights or resistance to build strength in your muscles. This includes free weights, weight machines, resistance bands and your own body weight. Read on to learn what the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare says about the top benefits of strength training.



Why should I begin strength training?

1. Injury prevention

Strength training enhances muscle strength and tone, reducing the risk of soft tissue injuries and slips, trips and falls. By strengthening your muscles, tendons and ligaments, you will see improvements in your overall physical capability, such as better balance, improved posture, increased strength and fitness. All of these benefits will make your home and work activities feel easier.

2. Increased bone density

By stimulating bone growth and increasing the strength of existing bones, strength training can help increase your bone density and reduce the risk of osteoporosis and fractures.

3. Weight management

It's great for weight management. When you gain muscle, your body burns more energy at rest by increasing your metabolic rate. Strength training helps you lose weight and keep it off!

4. General health

It assists in preventing and controlling chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, high blood pressure, back pain and depression.

5. Mental wellbeing

Strength training is a powerful tool for managing mental health, easing anxiety and depression. It's also a great way to meet new people and may help older adults reduce cognitive decline.

Recommendations before strength training

- ▶ If you've never performed strength training, it's recommended to get a health check by a health professional or your GP.
- ▶ In addition to a health check, get guidance from a qualified exercise professional such as an exercise physiologist or physiotherapist to determine which exercises are safe for you, based on your body's abilities.
- ▶ Set your exercise and wellbeing goals. Start slowly by setting realistic goals that motivate you to do a little better each time you train.
- ▶ Strength training should be a part of your weekly exercise routine. The recommendation is to perform this type of training at least twice a week.
- ▶ Vary your exercise routine to stop your workouts from becoming stale. Switching up your workout routine and introducing new exercises challenges your muscles and forces them to adapt and strengthen.
- ▶ Remember to rest and recover! You may get some soreness when you start or change your exercise program. This is called delayed onset muscle soreness and is a normal feeling.



Exercises – from beginner to advanced

Here's some great exercises for both beginners and those who are more advanced:

Push-ups

Beginner: Start with standing wall push-ups

Advanced: Knee push-ups then move to toe push-ups

Squats

Beginner: Body weight squats

Advanced: Add some dumbbells, barbells and resistance bands to your lunges or make them jump lunges.

Lunges

Beginner: Body weight lunges

Advanced: Add some dumbbells, barbells and resistance bands to your lunges or make them jump lunges.

Plank

Beginner: Bridge on knees

Advanced: Bridge on toes, or one leg - then increase the time of the bridge.

To further increase the difficulty of your exercises, increase repetitions, sets and weight.

If you feel pain with any exercise, stop the exercise and consult a health professional or GP for advice before continuing.



Creamy Tuscan Salmon – Fish, an excellent source of omega-3

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 20 minutes

Cooking tip: Not a fan of fish? Swap the fish for chicken instead.

Ingredients list

- ▶ 3 salmon fillets
- ▶ 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ▶ 2 tablespoons butter
- ▶ 5 cloves garlic, finely diced)
- ▶ 1 small onion, diced
- ▶ 80ml vegetable broth
- ▶ 150g jarred sun-dried tomato in oil, drained of oil
- ▶ 1 ¾ cups cream
- ▶ 3 cups baby spinach leaves
- ▶ ½ cup grated Parmesan
- ▶ 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- ▶ Salt and pepper to taste

Method

- ▶ Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
- ▶ Season both sides of the salmon with salt and pepper.
- ▶ Sear in the hot pan, flesh-side down first, for five minutes on each side or until cooked to your liking. Once cooked, remove from the pan and set aside.
- ▶ In the same pan, melt the butter in the remaining cooking juices. Include the diced garlic and fry for one minute.
- ▶ Add diced onions and fry until translucent.
- ▶ Then put in the sun-dried tomatoes and fry for 1-2 minutes.
- ▶ Finally, pour in the vegetable broth, and allow the sauce to slightly reduce.
- ▶ Reduce heat, add the cream, and bring to a gentle simmer while stirring occasionally.
- ▶ Include the baby spinach and allow to wilt into the sauce.
- ▶ Add the grated parmesan and allow the cream sauce to simmer for a further minute. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- ▶ Place the grilled salmon filets back into the pan, spoon the sauce over the filets, and sprinkle the parsley.
- ▶ Serve with steamed/roasted veggies, mashed potatoes, white/brown rice or pasta



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