

The importance of strength-based exercise

Physical activity is one of the five pillars of being healthy. Along with eating well, getting enough sleep, managing stress, not smoking and checking in with your mental health, regular exercise will keep your body functioning properly.

It takes a time commitment—at least 150 minutes a week of aerobic activity. That's just 30 minutes, five times each week.¹

Aerobic activity is excellent for your body. Go the extra mile by adding exercises that are strength-based and specifically targeted to building muscle.



Why build muscle?



As we age, women and men naturally lose strength, stability and bone density. Bone thinning can lead to osteopenia and osteoporosis. At the same time, we also lose muscle mass. This condition, called sarcopenia, coupled with osteoporosis, can leave you frail, more likely to fall and to break a bone.²

Regular weight-bearing and resistance exercise can help slow nature. It can also help you protect your body and balance to avoid falls and fractures in the future.

Support your body's needs

Eating a high-protein diet is all the rage these days. But drinking protein shakes and eating giant beef burgers does not guarantee you will gain muscle.³ Building muscle and bone density happens when there is adequate nutrition to support it. Eating a balanced diet full of calcium, vitamin D and protein² is the goal.



Average adults should eat 0.36 grams of protein for every pound they weigh.⁴ A person who weighs 180 pounds needs around 65 grams of protein daily to meet basic nutritional requirements (it could be more or less depending on age, weight, medical conditions and how active you are).

There are online calculators⁵ that can help you figure out how much protein you should eat to maintain and gain muscle.

How to get started

To preserve and build muscle, you need to stimulate it through weight-bearing and resistance exercises.

Use **resistance bands**, **dumbbells**, **exercise machines** or your **own body weight** to start a practice that incorporates all your major muscle groups. That means the quads (front of thighs), glutes (buttocks and hips), hamstrings (back of thighs), chest, back and core (abdomen).

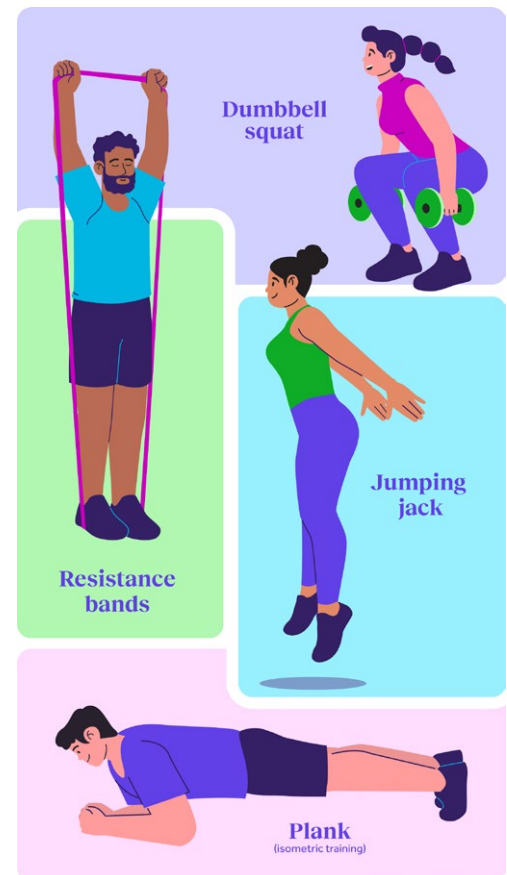
If that sounds overwhelming, focus on two simple options: plyometric and isometric training—jumping and planks.

Jumping⁶ places healthy stress on your bones, stimulating growth and improving density. It also strengthens the muscles used to generate power. Start with one or two sets of 5–10 hops once a week. Gradually increase repetitions, sets and frequency. Over time, you'll notice gains in strength, height and agility—making movements like skipping or jumping jacks feel easier.

Planks⁷ offer similar benefits. This push-up position strengthens your core, stabilizes your back and engages your glutes, hips and arms. It works nearly every muscle from head to toe. Try short sets of 10–30 seconds daily. Within a month, you'll feel stronger and see noticeable changes.

Better, without bulk

The goal is not to be a body builder. When building muscle for health, you'll feel it in how your clothes fit (better), how you sleep (better) and how you may now indulge in a treat without paying the price (muscle, even at rest, burns more calories than other tissue). As you get older, strength training will provide the most important benefits: maintaining balance, posture and the ability to be independent.



Learn how Teladoc Health can help support you on your wellness journey.
To sign up or learn more, go to TeladocHealth.com/smile/STATEOFIOWA.

Before starting any new exercise routine, talk to your healthcare provider to make sure it's safe.

¹<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/aha-recs-for-physical-activity-in-adults>

²<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/staying-healthy/exercise-and-bone-health/>

³<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/are-you-getting-too-much-protein>

⁴<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-much-protein-do-you-need-every-day-201506188096>

⁵<https://www.nal.usda.gov/human-nutrition-and-food-safety/dri-calculator>

⁶<https://blog.nasm.org/fitness/developing-power-in-everyday-athletes-with-plyometrics>

⁷<https://blog.nasm.org/progressive-core-training>

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