

Strength Training



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Section 1

Why Strength Training is Essential for Everyone

Let's get one thing clear: strength training is not just for athletes, bodybuilders, or people who "want to get toned." It's one of the most powerful tools available to **improve your health, metabolism, energy, vitality, and longevity**—no matter your age, background, or starting point.

Building and maintaining muscle is a cornerstone of long-term health. Yet many people still overlook it, focusing only on cardio for fat loss or movement in general for health. Cardio is great for endurance and cardiovascular health, but it doesn't hold a candle to the benefits of consistent, effective strength training. **Muscle is far more than just something that shapes your arms or helps you lift heavy objects. It's a metabolically active, protective, and life-extending tissue.** Think of your muscle mass as your health equivalent of a 401K. Here's why you need to start training it—right now.

Muscle Is Metabolically Active

Muscle burns more calories at rest than fat. That means the more muscle you have, the more energy your body uses—all the time, not just during workouts. We can't ignore the flip side - if you lose muscle due to not preserving your muscle mass as you age, you burn fewer calories. While cardio might burn more calories during your workout, **muscle increases the calories you burn throughout the other 23 hours of your day.** Over time, this helps with fat loss, weight maintenance, and metabolic health.

This shift in metabolism is why strength training is one of the most sustainable ways to improve body composition. It doesn't just burn calories—it raises your resting metabolic rate.



Muscle Is a Key Player in Your Immune System

You may not realize this, but muscle is a significant part of your immune defense. It acts as a reservoir for amino acids, which are required during immune responses—especially when your body is fighting illness or healing from injury.

In fact, during times of stress or sickness, your body pulls resources from your muscle tissue to mount a proper immune response. **Having more muscle means having more capacity to support your immune system.** This matters even more as we age, when immune function naturally begins to decline.

Muscle Loss Happens with Age—Unless You Fight It

Starting around age 30, we begin to lose muscle mass. This process, called sarcopenia, accelerates with each passing year—**unless we actively work against it.** By the time most people reach their 60s and 70s, they've lost a significant portion of their muscle mass.

This doesn't get enough airtime, but it's undeniably true: **aging has taken the blame for things that muscle loss did:** reduced metabolic rate, impaired immunity, low energy and more...these are more directly associated with loss of muscle than increased chronological age.

This muscle loss impacts strength, mobility, balance, and independence. It increases the risk of falls and fractures. It even plays a role in metabolic disorders like type 2 diabetes.

Strength training is the only way to halt and even reverse this decline. You need consistent, progressive resistance training.

Muscle Improves Balance, Joint Stability, and Injury Prevention

Muscle acts like armor. It supports your joints, improves your stability, and protects your bones. When you strength train, you're also improving the function of your tendons and ligaments.

This isn't about lifting as much as possible—it's about moving better and reducing your risk of injury in everyday life. From catching yourself when you trip to picking up a child or a suitcase, muscle makes your life more resilient.



| Muscle Supports Cognitive Health and Energy Levels

The benefits of strength training aren't just physical. There's increasing evidence that regular resistance training helps improve focus, memory, and mood. It improves circulation to the brain and helps regulate hormones that influence energy, motivation, and clarity.

People often assume strength training will make them more tired—but the opposite is usually true. Once your body adapts, you'll likely feel more energized, more mobile, and more ready to take on the day.

| Strength Training Is a Lifelong Investment

One of the biggest misunderstandings about strength training is that it's something we do just to look better, or just for now. In truth, **this is the most functional, future-focused training you can do.** It protects your independence. It keeps you on your feet, lifting your groceries, climbing stairs, catching yourself from a fall, and getting up off the floor when you're 70, 80, even 90.

Training today builds a body you'll rely on decades from now. It's not about beach season—it's about having the strength and balance to live a full life. There's a reason we say "strong people are harder to kill." It's not just about today—it's your buffer against frailty in the decades to come.

It is never too late to start. You might need to hear that again: *never!*

| Strength Training Builds Emotional Resilience

While strength training transforms your body, it also has a profound effect on your mind. Lifting doesn't just shape your muscles—it sharpens your confidence, your mental clarity, and your emotional capacity. It's hard to overstate how powerful it feels to set a goal, challenge your limits, and show yourself what you're capable of.

For many, lifting becomes a way to regulate emotion—to blow off stress, release tension, and build inner strength to match the outer. Over time, it shifts your identity: you're not just someone who works out—you become someone who shows up, who gets strong, who builds.

Strength is never just physical. It's emotional, psychological, and deeply personal. It changes how you see yourself and how you move through the world.

Section 2

Strength Training Myths & Misconceptions

You're convinced strength training matters—but maybe you're still carrying doubts. That makes sense. Most people walk into this conversation with years of *conflicting messages and half-truths*. These myths feel familiar, even protective. But they're holding you back. Let's break them down—completely.

Myth #1

“Lifting weights will make me bulky.”

Let's be crystal clear: muscle doesn't appear by accident. The physique you picture when you say “bulky” isn't just the result of lifting weights. It's the product of years of training, carefully calculated high-calorie eating, immaculate recovery, and often, anabolic steroids or performance-enhancing drugs.

Muscle gain happens slowly and requires significant commitment. You're not going to look in the mirror one morning and realize you've somehow turned into a bodybuilder. For most women especially, **the hormonal environment simply does not support excessive muscle growth without serious intervention.**

What most people perceive as “bulk” is usually a combination of fat gain and muscle gain—not muscle alone. If someone lifts weights and also eats in a surplus without intention or clarity, they may gain mass overall. But this isn't a weightlifting problem—it's a nutrition and programming issue (primarily nutrition).

The truth? Lifting weights gives you shape, structure, and posture. You look more athletic and feel more powerful. Your clothes fit better. Your waist looks smaller. You don't get bulky—you get capable. And, when nutrition is dialed in, you get lean.





Myth #2

“I’m afraid I’ll get hurt.”

This is a big one, and it’s understandable. If you’ve had injuries before, or if you’re not confident moving your body under load, fear is reasonable. But here’s the deeper truth: **the absence of strength is far more dangerous than the presence of weight.**

Injury risk increases when joints are unsupported, balance is compromised, and you lack the strength to stabilize your body under pressure. Those are the conditions that lead to tweaks, falls, and setbacks.

Strength training—done intentionally and progressively—builds resilience. It teaches your body how to absorb force, stay aligned, and recover. Yes, poor form and ego-lifting can cause injury, just like poor technique in any activity can. But that’s not a reason to avoid it—it’s a reason to learn how to do it right.

We don’t avoid driving because car accidents exist—we learn to drive safely. The same mindset applies here. Train smart. Move well. Start where you are.

Myth #3

“I walk every day” or “I do spin—that’s enough.”

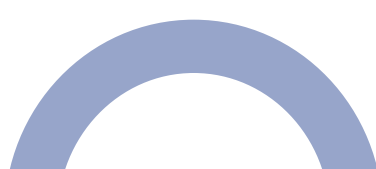
This one is sneaky, because it sounds responsible. “I’m active. I move. That should cover it.”

Yes, movement is medicine. Walking is fantastic for your heart, your head, and your hips. Spin class is great for cardio endurance. But neither of those will challenge your muscles in a way that builds strength or mass.

Walking and spinning are largely concentric, low-resistance movements. They don’t load your muscles progressively. They don’t stimulate hypertrophy. And they absolutely won’t stop the muscle loss that comes with aging.

If your goal is strength, shape, fat loss, bone health, or metabolic stability—you need more than just movement. You need challenge. You need tension. You need resistance.

Cardio supports your longevity. Strength training gives you the power to live fully in that long life.



Myth #4

“Strength training will make me stiff or inflexible.”

The opposite is true—when done properly, **strength training is one of the best ways to increase flexibility.**

Lifting weights through a full range of motion encourages both mobility and strength at your joints. Think of the depth in a squat, the reach of an overhead press, or the hinge in a Romanian deadlift. These are big, functional movements that improve how you move and feel.

Stiffness typically arises from lack of movement, not from lifting. **Poor posture, repetitive patterns, and extended sitting do far more damage to flexibility than a barbell ever will.** And when stiffness does come from training, it's usually from skipping warm-ups, cooldowns, or overtraining without recovery—not from strength work itself.

Myth #5

“You need a gym or expensive equipment.”

Nope. You need resistance. That's it. And resistance can come from bodyweight, dumbbells, resistance bands, backpacks, jugs of water, or anything else you can safely move against gravity.

You don't need machines. You don't need a squat rack. You don't need a membership. Do those things offer more variety and progression? Sure. But you can build a strong, functional, resilient body at home with smart programming and a few affordable tools.

The key is not what you use—it's how you use it. Are your muscles challenged? Are you progressing over time? If yes, you're training effectively. Period.

These myths don't just mislead—they paralyze. They give us reasons to hesitate, delay, or disqualify ourselves. But you don't need to wait. You don't need perfect conditions. You just need to begin—with truth, with a plan, and with the commitment to show up.



Section 3

Where to Start—Understanding Movement and Intensity

You're in. You're convinced. You understand the value of muscle and you're ready to begin. But maybe you're staring down your dumbbells wondering, *what does "start" actually mean? What should I do? How do I know if I'm doing it right? How heavy is heavy enough?*

This chapter is where we shift from theory to practice. Not into a complicated workout plan, but into understanding the principles behind a smart, strong start.

| What Does “Heavy” Actually Mean?

“Lift heavy” is a phrase thrown around often, but it's wildly misunderstood. What's heavy for you might be a warm-up for someone else—and that's exactly the point. There's no universal weight that qualifies as “heavy.” It's all relative to your body, your experience, and your current capacity.

So how do you know if a weight is heavy enough?

A good rule of thumb: the last 2–3 reps of your set should feel very challenging—but not sloppy. You should feel like you're approaching your limit, but you still have control, and your form isn't breaking down. That's your sweet spot.

If you're doing a set of 10 and you could have done 15? It's too light. If you're breaking down by rep 5 and losing form? It's too heavy. When in doubt, err on the side of good form and build up over time.

If you can do more than 12–15 reps with a weight, it's time to go heavier. Strength isn't built on comfort. It's built on challenge.



What About Resistance Bands?

Resistance bands are a popular tool—and with good reason. They're accessible, affordable, and portable. For many people training at home or just starting out, they offer a low-barrier way to begin strength training.

But while bands can absolutely be effective, especially in early stages, it's important to understand their limitations. Bands provide variable resistance—meaning the tension increases the more the band is stretched. This creates a situation where you experience the least resistance at the beginning of the movement (where you're often weakest) and the most at the end (where you're strongest).

Compare this to a dumbbell, kettlebell, barbell, or cable machine that offers relatively constant resistance throughout the range of motion—or challenges the mid-range, where we want to build the most strength. For example, when doing a banded squat, the load is lightest at the bottom (where you're working hardest to stabilize) and heaviest at the top (when the muscles are under less strain).

So, are bands useful? Yes. Are they optimal for building maximal strength or muscular balance long-term? Not quite. If your choice is between doing nothing or using bands—use bands. But as you develop your skills, look for opportunities to transition into free weights or cables for a more complete and effective training stimulus.

The Five Foundational Movement Patterns

To train effectively, you don't need to memorize 100 exercises. You need to understand five core movement patterns. These patterns mimic the way your body is designed to move in real life. Every effective strength program is built around them because they target major muscle groups, support joint function, and build balanced, functional strength.

Let's walk through each one.



1. The Squat

What it is: Think of sitting down in a chair and standing back up. That's a squat. Whether you're using your bodyweight, a dumbbell, or a barbell, you're training your legs (quads, glutes, hamstrings), your core, and your coordination.

Why it matters: You squat every time you sit, rise, or get in and out of a car. It's a daily movement pattern—and a foundational one for preserving mobility and independence as you age.

What if you have knee pain?

We hear this a lot: “I can't squat—I have bad knees.” And here's our response: how do you plan to use the toilet? How do you plan to get up from the couch? Squatting is not optional in daily life—it's a non-negotiable movement pattern. What is optional is how deep you go and how much load you use.

You do not need to squat below parallel. You do not need to push through pain. What you do need is to find your pain-free range of motion, strengthen it, and build from there. Squats can be shallow. They can be supported. They can be performed with a chair behind you. The goal is to train your body in the movements it already does every day—just with more intention and control.

2. The Hinge

What it is: A hinge is all about loading the hips. The classic example is a deadlift or Romanian deadlift. This pattern works your posterior chain—hamstrings, glutes, low back. If you pick up a bag of groceries off the floor, you're likely using this hinge pattern.

Why it matters: Hinging builds the backside of your body. It teaches you how to lift objects off the floor safely. It reinforces hip strength, posture, and spinal stability.

What if you have a history of back pain?

Another common line: “I can't hinge—I have a bad back.” But again, let's ask a bigger question: how do you plan to pick things up? Because bending over and lifting is part of being a human. So the question isn't whether you should do it—it's how to do it well.

We don't deadlift through pain. We don't slap on a weight belt and hope for the best. We start where your pain-free range of motion allows. Maybe that means a shorter range or lighter weight to start. Maybe it means slowing down and learning the mechanics. But avoiding the movement entirely only deepens the weakness that's likely contributing to the issue in the first place.

3. The Push

What it is: Any movement where you're pushing weight away from you. Think push-ups, overhead presses, bench presses.

Why it matters: Push strength translates to getting off the floor, pushing a heavy door open, or bracing yourself during a fall. It also strengthens your chest, shoulders, and triceps—all key stabilizers for your upper body.

What if pushing hurts your shoulders?

There are times when pain indicates a need for medical care—a torn labrum, for example, needs attention. But often, chronic shoulder discomfort is a result of weakness, imbalance, or faulty movement patterns. Avoiding pushing entirely only reinforces the problem.

We start by identifying what doesn't hurt. Maybe it's an incline push-up instead of a flat one. Maybe it's a half-kneeling dumbbell press instead of an overhead barbell lift. The key is to find a version of the push pattern that feels good, and then get strong in that version. From there, we rebuild.

4. The Pull

What it is: Movements that pull weight toward you. Pull-ups, rows, and even bicep curls fall under this category.

Why it matters: Pulling builds your back—an often-neglected area—and balances out all the pushing you do. It's essential for posture, shoulder health, and everyday movements like pulling open a door or lifting something heavy.

What if pull-ups feel impossible?

They might be—for now. But let's be honest: most people never achieve pull-ups not because they can't—but because they don't intentionally pursue them. Pull-ups are more than just pulling strength. They're about coordination, motor learning, and muscle memory. Your body may not know how to initiate the movement from a dead hang because it's never been asked to.

This is why we break goals down into small pieces. Maybe you need to work on scapular retraction. Maybe it starts with grip strength, or learning how to activate your lats. Maybe it's practicing a hold at the top or working on eccentric lowering. Every piece of the puzzle builds the full picture.

And let's be clear—being able to pull your own bodyweight isn't about a party trick. It's about real-life function and readiness. One of my favorite stories comes from a friend whose child was walking near a frozen lake. Two other kids fell in. Her son pulled one up by the arms and another by their sweatshirt. He saved lives because he was strong enough to act.

Think about that. Would you be able to pull your child—or yourself—out of danger? What about five years from now? Ten? Strength is protection.

5. Core Stability

What it is: This includes more than just “ab exercises.” True core training includes planks, dead bugs, carries, and rotational or anti-rotational movements like Pallof presses.

Why it matters: Your core isn't just there to look good in a swimsuit. It is the foundation of all movement. Strength flows from the core to the extremities. Your pressing power, your squat depth, your ability to hinge with integrity—they all depend on your core's ability to stabilize and transfer force.

We don't train the core just to get abs. We train it so we can lift more, move better, and protect our spine. It's what keeps us upright, what connects our limbs, and what gives every other movement its foundation.

What if core work hurts your low back?

Then you're likely doing something too advanced, too fast, or with poor alignment. Core work should support your spine, not stress it. Start with controlled breathing, bracing, and proper posture. Regress if needed, and then progress. Core strength isn't optional—it's essential.

Avoiding these movement patterns because of pain or fear is like avoiding brushing your teeth because you have a cavity that makes your teeth sensitive. The solution isn't to stop—it's to address the issue with the right tools, guidance, and progressions.

These movements are your daily reality. Your job isn't to skip them. Your job is to get stronger in them—starting with where you are, and moving forward from there

Section 4

Building the Blueprint—Structuring Workouts That Actually Work

Now that you understand how your body is meant to move—and why it matters—it’s time to translate that into a plan. But not just any plan. We’re not here to copy and paste a trendy fitness routine or jump to someone else’s version of “ideal.” We’re here to help you improve your baseline.

That’s the key. This isn’t about doing four strength workouts a week because some influencer said it’s optimal. It’s about starting from where you are. If you’re currently doing zero, one or two short workouts a week is a massive win. We’re not chasing perfection—we’re building consistency.

The most effective training plan is the one you’ll actually follow. And that starts with creating something that fits into your real life—not your fantasy schedule.



| Start Where You Are (Not Where You Wish You Were)

You don’t need to “earn” your right to lift by being fit first. You also don’t need to wait until you have time for a full hour in the gym. A 20-minute session at home with bodyweight movements absolutely counts.

If you’re brand new, you might spend your first few weeks just learning the movement patterns. Practicing squats, hinges, pushes, and pulls—without weight. That’s not a step backward; it’s the smartest place to begin. Great mechanics are your foundation.

If your goal is to train 3 times per week, but you’ve never done it before? Start with 1. Nail that. Make it part of your identity. Then go to 2. It’s not about fast results—it’s about forever habits.

That’s it. Not 30 different exercises. Not a “leg day” followed by a “chest day.” This full-body format is efficient, effective, and ideal for anyone training fewer than 5 days per week.

| Sets and Reps: The Realistic Range

- ▣ Beginners: 2–3 sets of 8–12 reps per movement
- ▣ Intermediate: 3–4 sets of 6–10 reps, increasing load as strength builds
- ▣ Advanced: 4–5 sets with varied rep ranges depending on goals (strength, hypertrophy, power)

Use the rule from Chapter 3: your last 2–3 reps should be challenging, but maintainable with good form.

| Progress Over Perfection

Progressive overload doesn't mean jumping 10 pounds every week. It means doing just a little more over time:

- ▣ One more rep
- ▣ Slower tempo
- ▣ Slightly more weight
- ▣ Shorter rest periods
- ▣ Better form

But What If It Doesn't Feel Like Enough?

If you're used to exhausting yourself with every workout—or if you believe soreness equals success—it may feel strange to train with this much intention and control. But remember: this isn't about fatigue. It's about adaptation.

Your goal isn't to crawl out of your workout—it's to walk into the next one ready for more. The goal is not to prove you're fit. It's to become fit.

Strength training is not a race. It's a practice. And like any good practice, the goal is to keep showing up—sustainably, consistently, and with increasing clarity.



Section 5

Eat to Build—Why Nutrition Outweighs Supplements

Supplements can be helpful. But they are not the foundation of your results. They're called supplements for a reason—they supplement your habits. They don't replace them.

Your body isn't built in the moments you swallow a capsule or mix a scoop of powder—it's built in the choices you make every day: how you fuel your workouts, how you support your recovery, and how you create a hormonal and metabolic environment for muscle growth and fat loss.

And there's no greater nutritional lever you can pull than **protein**.

| Why Protein Is Essential—Especially When You Train

Protein is the raw material for muscle growth, repair, and maintenance. It's also deeply involved in hormone regulation, immune health, metabolic rate, and appetite control. If you're lifting to get strong, stay lean, and age well, protein isn't optional—it's non-negotiable.



But here's where most people miss the mark: they under-eat protein, over-rely on carbs and fat, and assume a multivitamin or collagen scoop will bridge the gap.

It won't.

Instead, what bridges the gap is **intentionality**—and consistency.

How Much Protein Do You Need?

The gold standard for protein intake is **1 gram per pound of lean body mass**, or **1 gram per pound of ideal body weight**, whichever is easier to estimate. This isn't about perfection. It's a starting point.

If you weigh 180 pounds and have 25% body fat:

- ❑ **Fat mass:** $180 \times 0.25 = 45$ lbs
- ❑ **Protein target:** ~ 135 g/day
- ❑ **Lean body mass:** $180 - 45 = 135$ lbs

If that feels impossible, start where you are.

- ❑ **If you're currently eating 40 grams of protein a day, aim for 50.**
- ❑ **When you consistently hit 50, increase to 60.**
- ❑ **Build gradually, just like you would with your weights.**

Protein habits are just like strength habits—they're earned through repetition and small wins, not overwhelm.

What Does Enough Protein Look Like?

Here's what ~ 130 grams of protein can look like over a day:

FOOD ITEM	SERVING	PROTEIN (G)
2 eggs + 1 egg white	breakfast	14g
Greek yogurt	snack	18g
4 oz grilled chicken	lunch	28g
½ cup cottage cheese	afternoon snack	14g
4 oz salmon	dinner	25g
½ cup lentils	side dish	9g
TOTAL		~ 108g

Add in an extra ounce of turkey, a sprinkle of cheese, or another scoop of yogurt and you're easily in the 120–130g range—no tracking app required.

Protein First, Always

When in doubt, **lead with protein:**

- ❑ **Breakfast?** Start with eggs, yogurt, or leftover dinner protein.
- ❑ **Lunch?** Build around chicken, tuna, tofu, or beans—not bread.
- ❑ **Dinner?** Make the protein the centerpiece, not the carbs.

You don't need to eliminate carbs or fat. Just prioritize protein. It stabilizes blood sugar, controls cravings, and gives your body what it needs to recover and rebuild.

Whole Foods Before Supplements

Supplements like protein powders, collagen, or creatine can absolutely be useful. But they're not your foundation.

Whole food protein sources give you:

- ❑ **Satiety and satisfaction**
- ❑ **Vitamins and minerals**
- ❑ **Fiber and fullness**
- ❑ **Nutrient synergy you won't find in powders**

If you're not consistently hitting your baseline with food, that's where your energy should go first. Once that's dialed in, a scoop of protein powder can be a helpful tool—not a crutch.

Final Word: Fuel Your Function

You can't build strength on a weak foundation. You can't create muscle without enough raw material. And you definitely can't show up strong if you're under-fed and under-fueled.

- ❑ **Eat like someone who lifts.**
- ❑ **Fuel like someone who wants to last.**
- ❑ **Let your food reflect your goals.**

Nutrition doesn't need to be complicated. It needs to be consistent—and aligned with the body you're working to build.

Section 6

Strong Feet, Strong Foundation— Why Foot Health Matters

Your feet are the literal foundation of every movement you make. They support your entire body, absorb impact with every step, and influence everything upstream—your knees, hips, spine, and even your shoulders. Yet for most people, foot health is an afterthought—until it becomes a problem.

Ignoring your feet is like building a house on sand. No matter how strong the walls are, if the foundation is unstable, everything above it is compromised. This chapter is your reminder—and your guide—to start training your feet like the vital structures they are.

| Your Feet Are Meant to Move

Each foot contains 26 bones, 33 joints, and over 100 muscles, tendons, and ligaments. They are marvels of engineering—designed to move, flex, stabilize, and adapt to a wide variety of terrain and movement. But most modern life asks very little of them.

We cram them into narrow shoes, walk mostly on flat, hard surfaces, and rarely use their full range of motion. Over time, the muscles of the feet grow weak, the arches collapse, and imbalances creep up through the rest of the body.

The result? We lose balance, develop joint pain, and experience movement inefficiencies that sap strength and increase injury risk.



Signs Your Feet Might Be Weak

- ❑ You feel unstable during lunges or single-leg exercises
- ❑ Your ankles collapse inward when you squat or walk
- ❑ You avoid barefoot movement due to discomfort
- ❑ You have recurring issues with knees, hips, or lower back

Often, the issue isn't your knees or your form—it's what's happening at the ground level.

Start Reconnecting to Your Feet

Improving foot health doesn't require fancy equipment. It requires attention and intention. Here's how to start:

1 Go Barefoot (Strategically)

Begin by walking barefoot at home—especially on varied surfaces like carpet, grass, or turf. This stimulates proprioception (your sense of spatial awareness) and starts to re-engage dormant muscles.

2 Toe Spreads and Lifts:

Practice lifting your big toe while keeping the others down, and vice versa. Then practice spreading your toes apart like fingers. These small actions restore mobility and neural connections.

3 Roll and Mobilize:

Use a lacrosse ball or mobility ball to gently roll the bottoms of your feet, especially the arches. This improves blood flow, reduces tension, and enhances foot awareness.

4 Strengthen with Load:

Progress to standing barefoot balance drills—single-leg stands, toe walks, and heel walks. Eventually, work up to barefoot squats or lunges if appropriate for your training level.

5 Choose Foot-Friendly Footwear:

Opt for shoes that allow your toes to spread and your foot to move naturally. Overly cushioned or stiff shoes restrict motion and weaken the foot over time.

Your feet should not be passive platforms—they should be strong, mobile, and responsive. By building strength from the ground up, you improve everything above.

Section 7

The Power of the Pelvic Floor—What Strength Training Often Ignores

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles you can't see—but they impact everything from core strength to bladder control to hip mobility and low back health. Especially for women (but also critical for men), training the pelvic floor is not optional—it's essential.

This chapter is your invitation to take this powerful system seriously, whether you're postpartum, peri-menopausal, active, aging, or anywhere in between.

| What Is the Pelvic Floor?

Imagine a sling of muscles that runs from your pubic bone to your tailbone, forming the bottom of your core. These muscles support your bladder, bowel, and reproductive organs. They also play a crucial role in:

- ▣ Core stabilization
- ▣ Breath control
- ▣ Postural support
- ▣ Sexual function
- ▣ Managing intra-abdominal pressure

| Why It Breaks Down

Pelvic floor dysfunction can arise from pregnancy, childbirth, prolonged sitting, chronic constipation, high-impact sports, or simply lack of awareness. Common symptoms include:

- ▣ Leaking during lifting, jumping, or sneezing
- ▣ Pelvic heaviness or pressure
- ▣ Lower back or hip pain
- ▣ Difficulty engaging the core during workouts

Yet because these symptoms are so personal—and often stigmatized—many people simply accept them as normal. They are not.

Strengthening the Pelvic Floor Starts with Awareness

The first step is learning to contract and relax these muscles properly. A simple exercise to begin with:

Diaphragmatic Breathing + Pelvic Floor Activation

- ❑ Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat.
- ❑ Inhale deeply, letting your belly rise (not your chest).
- ❑ As you exhale, gently draw up your pelvic floor (like stopping the flow of urine), and lightly brace your lower abs.
- ❑ Inhale and fully release.

This “contract-relax” sequence builds coordination between your breath and pelvic floor. It’s subtle but powerful.

Strengthening the Pelvic Floor Starts with Awareness

We don’t isolate the pelvic floor—we integrate it into functional movement. That means syncing it with every squat, hinge, push, and pull.

- ❑ During a deadlift: Inhale before the pull. As you lift, exhale and gently engage your pelvic floor and core.
- ❑ During a squat: Exhale on the way up with a controlled pelvic brace—not a hard squeeze, but a functional engagement.
- ❑ Avoid bearing down: Many people mistake bracing for pushing pressure downward. Instead, think “up and in” rather than “down and out.”

Strengthening the Pelvic Floor Starts with Awareness

If you’re experiencing consistent symptoms or feel unsure, working with a pelvic floor physical therapist is invaluable. Just like you wouldn’t guess your way through rehabbing a shoulder injury, don’t guess here either. These muscles deserve expert attention.

Pelvic floor work isn’t about doing hundreds of Kegels. It’s about connection, timing, and strength integration. When you build that connection, your whole body works better—and you become stronger from the inside out.

The Power of the Pelvic Floor—What Strength Training Often Ignores

How often should I train? What about rest days?

You don't get stronger from lifting weights. You get stronger from recovering after lifting weights. Strength training is a stressor—it breaks your muscles down in a controlled and intentional way.

But the real gains happen during recovery, when your body adapts, rebuilds, and becomes more resilient. This is why rest isn't a break from progress—it's part of the process.

If you're just starting out, 2–3 full-body workouts per week is fantastic. That leaves ample time for rest days in between. And if you're training with more frequency, rotating movement patterns and intensity (e.g. upper vs lower body, or heavy vs light days) is essential.

Rest days aren't lazy. They're strategic.

What if I can't do the full movement? How do I scale?

This is one of the most important mindset shifts you can make: scaling isn't weakness. It's intelligence.

Every single movement can be regressed (made simpler) or progressed (made more challenging). Can't do a push-up on the floor yet? Start with an incline. Can't squat to full depth? Use a box. Struggling with a full pull-up? Work on negatives, band assistance, or grip strength.

And it's not just about making movements easier. It's about meeting yourself where you are, so you can train with great form, appropriate resistance, and full confidence.

Most mainstream programs online don't show you how to do this. They give you one version of the exercise—take it or leave it. But what if your knees hurt in that variation? What if your core collapses halfway through?

That's where thoughtful coaching makes all the difference. A good coach helps you find the variation that fits your baseline and shows you how to progress from there. That's how you train smarter—not harder.

How long before I start seeing results?

This is the golden question. And the answer depends on what kind of results you're looking for.

If you're thinking aesthetics—muscle tone, fat loss, clothing changes—give it 6 to 12 consistent weeks. Maybe more. That kind of progress takes time, and it's influenced by nutrition, sleep, and stress—not just training.

But here's what most people don't realize: **you'll get stronger before you get visibly different.** That's not just motivational fluff—it's neurology.

In the first 4–6 weeks of strength training, most of your gains are neurological. Your brain is learning how to fire muscles in sync. You're developing control, stability, and coordination. It's not just about building tissue—it's about improving your connection to that tissue.

This is why a movement that felt clunky and awkward at first might feel smooth and powerful by week four. That's not just muscle—it's motor learning.

And that matters more than you think. Because when you feel coordinated, competent, and strong—you're more likely to stay with it. You're not waiting to look different to feel different. The payoff starts much sooner than most people realize.

But How Do I Actually Do This?

You get it—strength matters.

But what if you're limited on time?

Don't have a gym?

Struggling with past injuries or low energy?

That's exactly where Strong Foundations meets you.

This is built for real life

- ✓ Your equipment—even if it's just a couple dumbbells or resistance bands
- ✓ Your limitations—we give you endless scaling and support
- ✓ Your time—we design short, effective workouts that fit your life
- ✓ Your questions—answered by real coaches, not a robot



Here's what you'll get:

- ✓ Clear, simple video tutorials that teach you how to move well
- ✓ Custom progressions for every strength level and body type
- ✓ Unlimited direct messaging support
- ✓ A community of people doing it right alongside you
- ✓ Structured workouts you can follow with confidence

You're not supposed to figure this out alone.

Strong Foundations gives you the “how” that actually works for your life—now, not someday.

Let's build your strength—together.

It's just \$39/month and you can cancel anytime. That's less than lunch with a friend for a process and support that will enhance every single area of your life and health.

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