



PICK UP THE WEIGHTS AND GET OFF THE TREADMILL FOR FASTER RESULTS

by Roger E. Adams, PhD, CISSN, ACE-CPT

Working out and improving your fitness can seem like a daunting task when you don't know where to begin, which type of exercise is best, or how long you should work out. I want to help clear up any confusion and tell you what I tell my own clients – strength training is the most important thing you can do. Even if you only have 30 minutes.

The benefits of strength training are tremendous and superior in the long run (pun intended) to cardiorespiratory exercise. Cardio activities like running, cycling, rowing and others are extremely important, but if you are looking to prioritize what you do for physical activity, strength training is crucial.

WHAT IS STRENGTH TRAINING?

Strength training is a physical exercise that uses resistance to build muscular strength and endurance. You can use free weights, exercise machines, resistance bands or your own body weight!

Strength training can help you build muscle mass, increase bone density and improve your metabolism. As a bonus, beginners will have greater gains early on than someone who's been strength training for many years.

What strength training does to improve your health:

- **Burn more fat:** Muscle is more metabolically active than fat, so the more you have, the more calories you burn all day – even at the same activity level. Don't believe the myth that a pound of muscle burns 50 calories more a day than fat. The math isn't accurate; however, muscle does burn more energy and requires more calories during exercise, so moving them more in the gym and throughout your day will burn more calories.
- **Prevent injury:** Strong muscles mean strong, supported bones and connective tissue, which will all help your body withstand higher levels of physical stress without injury. This is a positive side effect at any age, but especially as we get older and are more prone to falling.
- **Improve overall health:** Studies show resistance training can enhance heart and bone health, reduce blood pressure, lower cholesterol, increase bone density, reduce low back pain, improve sleep, and ease symptoms of arthritis and fibromyalgia. Getting older isn't easy, but the longer you can stay healthy and active, the better.
- **Improve mood:** Strength training releases feel-good endorphins, which reduce anxiety and can even help fight depression. Beyond supporting mental health through endorphins, strength training will help improve your self-esteem and body image.

Now that you know the numerous benefits of strength training, the next step is getting started. Always start with the basics and remember that it's better to establish a healthy habit than it is to worry about being perfect. The perfect workout is the one that is right for you at this moment in your life.

HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE STEPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

1. Start with bodyweight exercises like squats, lunges, push-ups and planks.
2. Gradually add weight to your routine as you get stronger.
3. Focus on compound exercises that work multiple muscle groups at once. Compound exercises involve more than one joint. For example, a squat involves the hip, knee and ankle.
4. Aim for 2-3 strength training sessions per week.



If you are relatively new to the gym life, you may feel a bit intimidated or even uncomfortable with strength training. Don't let 'gym-timidation' take away from your fitness goals. There are many ways to overcome that feeling and crush those workouts.

1. **Start small:** Begin with short workouts at home or outside.
2. **Find a workout buddy:** Partner up to make workouts more enjoyable and less intimidating.
3. **Try group fitness classes:** Find your favorite class led by an instructor who can motivate and guide you through your workout. Group classes are great for beginners because you don't feel like you are struggling alone. You may even find a workout partner for future sessions.
4. **Hire a personal trainer:** Invest in yourself and hire a personal trainer for customized training sessions to help meet your needs and goals. You can even hire me to help you get comfortable with those home strength-training workouts.

If going to the gym seems like an impossibility at this point, don't worry — you're not alone. About one-third of respondents in a recent study said they're too self-conscious to join a gym. If this sounds like you, I'd recommend you visit and 'interview' several gyms or fitness studios before deciding that going to a gym isn't for you. Visit at a time you would normally go to see how crowded it is, what they offer, what amenities they have, and whether they specialize in specific activities such as strength training or boxing.

If you want to sample classes at several different gyms to see what you like, look into ClassPass — an app that partners with local gyms and offers users discounts on classes (no gym membership needed).

If, after you read this, you would like more information or tips on how to start a strength training program that is right for you, please reach out to me. I work with people all over the world, helping them achieve greater levels of fitness.

About the Author:

Roger E. Adams, PhD, CISSN, ACE-CPT, is a weight-loss and fitness expert with over 25 years in private practice. He is the founder and chief nutritionist of [eatrightfitness](http://eatrightfitness.com), an international evidence-based consulting practice focusing on weight-loss and sports performance in Hudson, Ohio. He is also the Co-founder and Director of Education for the Global Performance Nutrition Institute (GPNi) and teaches sports nutrition classes worldwide. Dr. Adams is a proud and active member of the American Council on Exercise, the Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics, and the Obesity Action Coalition. You can reach him at roger@eatrightfitness.com or visit his website at eatrightfitness.com for a free consultation.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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