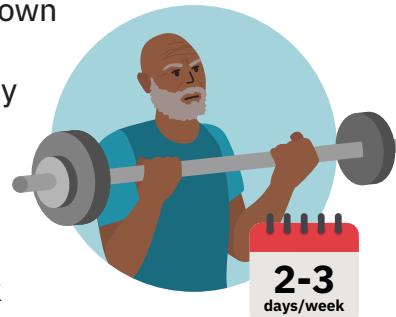


Strength Training for Older Adults

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS: Orson Austin, MD, University of Cincinnati; Robert Bales, MD, MPH, Case Western Reserve University; Kristin Baughman, PhD, Northeast Ohio Medical University; Shanail Berry Lampkin, MD, Case Western Reserve University; Eileen Seeholzer, MD, MS, Case Western Reserve University, on behalf of Team Best Practices

Strength training, also known as resistance exercise, plays a vital role in healthy aging. It helps to build and maintain muscle mass and strength, improves physical function, reduces the risk of falls and fractures, supports chronic disease management, and promotes greater independence for older adults.¹ In addition, a 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis found that strength training improves most measures of quality of life for this population.²



Despite these benefits, older adults may be hesitant to participate in strength training due to limited awareness of its benefits, fear of injury or worsening of other health conditions, and lack of experience with resistance exercises.³

Strength training programs can be safely tailored for most older adults. Accessibility may be improved by teaching proper techniques, including the correct use of weight machines and ways to use household items for strengthening exercises without special equipment.

Health care providers should encourage older adults to engage in strength training two to three times per week. Patients should start with eight to 12 repetitions per exercise, rest for 2-3 minutes, and repeat the set 1-3 times, gradually increasing the number of sets every few weeks as tolerated.¹

For more information, access Cardi-OH's expanded resources on [lifestyle prescriptions](#) and [home exercise for patients with disabilities](#).

References

1. Izquierdo M, de Souto Barreto P, Arai H, et al. Global consensus on optimal exercise recommendations for enhancing healthy longevity in older adults (ICFSR). *J Nutr Health Aging*. 2025;29(1):100401. doi:10.1016/j.jnha.2024.100401.
2. Khodadad Kashi S, Mirzazadeh ZS, Saatchian V. A systematic review and meta-analysis of resistance training on quality of life, depression, muscle strength, and functional exercise capacity in older adults aged 60 years or more. *Biol Res Nurs*. 2023;25(1):88-106. doi:10.1177/10998004221120945.
3. Hurst C, Dismore L, Grand A, et al. Attitudes and barriers to resistance exercise training for older adults living with multiple long-term conditions, frailty, and a recent deterioration in health: qualitative findings from the Lifestyle in Later Life – Older People's Medicine (LILL-OPM) study. *BMC Geriatr*. 2023;23(1):772. doi:10.1186/s12877-023-04461-5.
4. National Institutes of Health. National Institute on Aging. Exercise and Physical Activity for Older Adults: Staying Active as You Age. https://order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/exercise-and-older-adults-nia_0.pdf. Published March 2025. Accessed September 12, 2025.

Example Strength Training Activities^{1,4}

- Resistance bands, weight machines, or hand-held weights
- Bodyweight exercises, such as arm circles, leg raises, wall push-ups, toe stands, planks, squats, or lunges
- Carrying heavy objects, such as groceries or laundry
- Gardening activities that involve digging, lifting, or pulling
- Sit-to-stand exercises from a chair

Additional Resources

- Vivfrail – Materials for Professionals Responsible for the Prescription of a Program of Physical Exercise
vivifrail.com/resources/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Growing Stronger - Strength Training for Older Adults
cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/growing_stronger.pdf
- National Institute on Aging – Exercise and Older Adults Toolkit
nia.nih.gov/toolkits/exercise