



# Strengthen Your Muscles

**CHALLENGE**  
Exercise your muscles with strength training.

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Strengthen Your Muscles."
2. To complete the challenge, exercise your muscles with strength training at least two days a week. And do aerobic exercise at least three days a week.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Rocky Balboa was just trying to survive and make a few bucks when he first stepped into the boxing ring as the lead character in the movie *Rocky*. He was strong enough to win some fights. But he didn't have the muscle to take on the heavyweight champ. He knew he needed to be stronger to stand a fighting chance.

With the help of his trainer, Rocky embarked on an unorthodox strength-training regimen (cue the theme song "Eye of the Tiger"). He punched sides of beef in a meat locker. He charged up the 72 cement steps at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He chased a chicken. In later movies, he chopped wood, threw large rocks, and did one-handed push-ups. When he finally stepped in the ring, he was stronger, faster, and ready for the fight of his life.

You may not be planning to quit your day job to pursue a boxing career. But you can benefit from giving your muscles a workout. The estimated 640 muscles in your body support your bones, help you move around, and provide balance and stability. When your muscles are strong, everyday tasks are easier. Research also shows that strength training reduces the risk for chronic diseases and injury and helps you live longer. Take the month-long Health Challenge to Strengthen Your Muscles.



### Take the Strength Training Quiz

How much do you know about strength training? Take this quiz to find out.

#### True False

- Strength training is not recommended for people with back pain.
- Strength training helps control blood pressure.
- Strength training is not an effective way to lose weight.
- Strength training can improve bone and muscle health.
- Strength training can improve mood and longevity.
- Strength training is recommended primarily for those in good health under age 60.

Answers: 1. False. 2. True. 3. False. 4. True. 5. True. 6. False

If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, there's more you can learn about strength training! Strength training improves your overall health, reduces your risk for chronic diseases, and helps you live longer.

## Listen Up – Benefits of Strength Training

Lift weights. Do push-ups. Give your child a piggyback ride. Any kind of resistance exercise strengthens your muscles, and it's an important part of fitness. Research shows that strength training builds stronger muscles and bones, strengthens connective tissues, and supports brain health. It can deliver a punch powerful enough to reduce the risk for lower back pain, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, depression, osteoporosis, and obesity.

### Exercise Your Heart, Lungs, and Muscles

In an 18-year study of 32,000 people, researchers tracked how often people did aerobic exercise and strength training. They found that those who exercised their heart, lungs, and muscles for at least five hours a week lost the most weight and reduced their risk for diabetes by up to 59 percent.

If you do strength training exercises at least two days a week, and 30 to 60 minutes of aerobic exercise on the other days, you could well be adding years to your life.

After age 40, your body loses about one percent of muscle a year. Research shows that strength training can help you retain muscle mass and improve bone health. The benefits begin at any age.

In a study of 400 sedentary seniors, one group followed a 10-week strength-training program where they performed simple exercises. This group maintained or improved their walking speed and strength. But many in the sedentary group walked slower, and some even needed to use a cane or walker who hadn't before.

## Pick Strength-Training Exercises

Rocky Balboa picked some unconventional ways



to work out and strengthen his muscles. But there truly are many ways and exercises you can do to strengthen your muscles. Here's how to pick the right ones.

**Choose exercises that strengthen all the major muscle groups of the body:** arms, shoulders, chest, back, abdomen, hips, thighs, and lower legs (Examples: push-ups, curl-ups, squats, weight lifting, and even kid lifting). Vary the exercises every few weeks.

**Start with an exercise you can do 8 to 12 times before becoming fatigued.** When the exercise becomes easy, add more repetitions or weights to continue building strength.

**Perform one set of each exercise.** The last repetition should be challenging, but you should be able to complete it. Use good form, and go through a full range of motion. Stop if the exercise becomes too difficult.

### At Home

- ✓ Dust off your home-gym or workout equipment and use it.
- ✓ Work in the yard, or rearrange your furniture.
- ✓ Lift a gallon of milk, water, or laundry detergent a few times before you use it.
- ✓ Do bent-knee sit-ups, curl-ups, and push-ups during commercials.
- ✓ Follow along with an exercise DVD.
- ✓ Build more muscle strength at home: <http://tinyurl.com/aj34kwj>



### At Work

- ✓ Use a resistance band to exercise in your office.
- ✓ Sit on an exercise ball instead of a chair.
- ✓ Take a break from work to go to the gym.
- ✓ Keep an exercise mat in your office.
- ✓ Do wall push-ups, seated-knee lifts, wall-squats, and other office-friendly exercises.
- ✓ Try these resistance band exercises: <http://tinyurl.com/77mzqrf>



### In the Gym

- ✓ Learn to use exercise machines and weights.
- ✓ Learn proper and safe lifting techniques.
- ✓ Choose exercises that work all your major muscle groups.
- ✓ Take a strength-training class like Pilates, CrossFit, or Bootcamp.
- ✓ Get stronger in the gym: <http://tinyurl.com/avnqdx4>



### 3 Steps to Building Muscle

1. Exercise the muscle.
2. Eat adequate protein. Drink a glass of nonfat milk or soymilk soon after a weight-training session. It's the best time to give your muscles the protein and amino acids they need.
3. Rest between workouts, and get adequate sleep.

## Smart Start to Strength Training

Strength training forces your muscles to work harder than they normally would. But too much too soon can be a problem.

- **Start at an easy level.** This will help prevent muscle soreness – a natural consequence of doing an activity that your muscles are not used to. Some soreness is also a sign your muscles are getting stronger.
- **Warm up before you workout.** Spend a few minutes walking, jogging, or cycling before you workout. This delivers more oxygen to your muscles and improves blood flow. A warm-up also makes your muscles more flexible and reduces your risk for injury.
- **Don't hold your breath when you exercise.** This can greatly increase your blood pressure. Breathe out when you lift or contract. Breathe in when you relax the muscle.
- **Allow a short rest time between each exercise set** (about one minute) so you can do the next exercise set in good form.
- **Ask a fitness trainer to show you how to get started safely and correctly.** Or use a smartphone app, online videos, or exercise DVD to see how to perform exercises properly.
- **Exercise with a training partner** who can provide feedback, assistance, and motivation.
- **Record your progress.** Keep track of the number of repetitions you complete, or the amount of weight you lift for each exercise. This will help you stay motivated as you see your strength improve.
- **Be patient.** It takes time to build muscle strength. If you're extra sore after your first workout, take a break for a few days before your next strength-training workout. You'll give your muscles time to recover, and be stronger when you get back on track.

Sources: Archives of Internal Medicine.; Harvard School of Public Health.; Journal of Occupational Medicine.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.; American College of Sports Medicine.; American Council on Exercise.; Journal of Gerontology.

# Strengthen Your Muscles



**CHALLENGE**  
 Exercise your muscles with strength training.

**Instructions**

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you exercise your muscles with strength training and do aerobic exercise.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you exercised. You must exercise your muscles with strength training at least 8 days, and with aerobic exercise on at least 12 days this month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I did strength training

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I did aerobic exercise



**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

-----  
 -----

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_