

GREATIST

19 Reasons to Start Strength Training

If you're sticking to healthy weeknight meals, hitting up the elliptical machine regularly, and yet, you're just not seeing the results you thought you would—there could be something critical missing. And that something is strength training.

Strength training isn't just for gym rats and Schwarzenegger-wannabes. Regular weight training can benefit just about everyone in myriad ways. We're talking better sleep, less stress, and more energy. Read on for the top reasons that lifting weights goes way beyond getting buff.



1. Rev up your metabolism.

After a few dates with some dumbbells, both guys and gals will notice an increase in resting metabolic rate. And with the right diet, routine lifting may help you lose weight more effectively than cardio alone.

2. Build muscle.

Whether the goal is strength gains or weight loss, there's a lifting regimen that will deliver optimal results. And, as you get older, strength training can help combat the natural decline in muscle and bone density (HIIT training may be especially effective at fighting osteoporosis).

3. Prevent injury.

Lifting weights is key to staying injury free. In addition to muscles being stronger, studies show that resistance training can lead to stronger ligaments and tendons (those are the tough connective tissues that hold bone to bone or muscle to bone, respectively), meaning you're less prone to tears or other injuries in everyday activities.

4. Increase flexibility.

Over time, resistance training may help improve flexibility. In one study of sedentary women, moderate strength training did just that—no down dog required.

5. Get stronger bones.

If chugging glasses of milk just isn't your thing (hello, Paleo fans!), weight training may be just the fix you need. Lifting will help bones toughen up, which can lower the risk for fractures.

6. Jump-start power.

Eager to sprint faster or jump higher? An extra dose of dumbbells can work fast-twitch muscles, the speedy muscle fibers responsible for generating power. The result: You'll see gains the next time you play a game of tennis or basketball, in addition to getting stronger in the gym.

7. See results... fast.

One final physical incentive? Strength training can offer speedy results. It only takes two to three weekly sessions (for less than a month) to see muscles shape up. Not interested in bench pressing 200 pounds? Not to worry: Lifting lighter weights can also be effective at building muscle—as long as you're still causing muscle fatigue.

8. Get strong anywhere.

This probably doesn't come as a surprise, but you don't need a gym membership to start getting stronger. There are plenty of ways to strength train at home with no

equipment. Try our [30-minute bodyweight workout](#) or this [15-minute HIIT routine](#) to get started ASAP.



9. Up that I.Q.

Turns out, hitting the books might not be the only way to give your brain a boost. Any [exercise](#) will help keep your brain healthy, but [researchers](#) found that resistance training resulted in beneficial cognitive functioning in older adults, while [multiple studies](#) have found similar results in animals.

10. Amp up productivity.

Squeezing in a quick workout [may help](#) you stay focused throughout the workday. (Even if you can't get to the gym, taking a [30-minute walk](#) during your lunch hour can also boost your mood and reduce stress.)

11. Beat boredom.

Muscles need time to [recover](#), and (surprise!) your body will quickly learn to adapt to a new challenge, so switching up your routine is a must. Find four easy ideas on how to make that happen [here](#).

12. Fight the blues.

Life got you down? Research suggests resistance training can release feel-good endorphins to help keep anxiety at bay, and may even help fight depression.

13. Boost self-esteem.

Lifting can help improve a person's perceived body image. And while we don't have a study to back this up, we think it feels awesome to track progress and see strength gains week after week.

14. Perk up that attitude.

Unhappy at work? Studies show lifting can have psychological benefits, including feeling more positive at the office. (And if that still doesn't work, here are three other ideas on how to handle a job that's totally stressing you out.)



15. Cut down your cancer risk.

One study found resistance training three times a week for six months led to reduced oxidative stress, which can lessen our cancer risk (for the record, the study also had similar results when testing hatha yoga). So get lifting and fuel up with antioxidants to double-team disease.

16. Protect the heart.

A heart-healthy diet isn't the only path to wellness. Lifting also has cardiovascular powers that could help protect us from heart disease.

17. Improve cardio strength.

Hate the treadmill? A fast-paced resistance workout (look for ones that build muscular endurance) can keep your heart rate up and might even count as cardio. If you're unsure of where to start, try this metabolic routine that combines strength and cardio.

18. Catch zzzs with ease.

There are many well-known remedies to help us fall asleep— like sipping herbal tea and taking a hot shower. And while exercise in general has been shown to help make snoozing a breeze, studies suggest weight lifting in particular can lead to a better night's sleep.

19. Get better in bed.

An all-around stronger body can boost stamina and give you extra energy when you need it most. (Let's face it: Panting isn't *always* sexy.)

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