

Beginning Strength Training For Seniors



Every second of the day, someone aged 65 or older will fall. 36 million falls will occur annually, and this accounts for 95% of hip fractures in the U.S. Strength training is a relatively easy way to help decrease a person's fall risk, and positively affect many different aspects of their life. Starting a new strength training routine can be an easy thing, albeit sometimes scary, to add to your schedule to make sure you reduce your risk of age-related ailments and maladies. There is a lot of information that exists in the resistance training world, and sometimes it can be daunting to get started when there is a plethora of information out there of what is "best" or "optimal".

A strength training routine can be very simple. You will have your prime movers exercises (large muscles) and your helper exercises (small muscles). You should aim to complete your strength training routine 2-3x per week, and you should try to keep the same schedule if you can, because that is one of the first steps towards building consistency. If you are new to strength training, starting with the machines in the gym would be a good idea because they have a smaller learning curve, and they take care of the movement for you so you can just focus on working the muscle. After you build some muscle and consistency, you can look into using free weights, but by no means is it an absolute necessity. Most machines will have a diagram on them that shows what muscles are being worked, and you will choose and exercise for the following muscles (prime movers):

- Chest (Pectorals)
- Back (Latissimus Dorsi)
- Thighs (Quadriceps/Quads)
- Backside (Glutes and/or Hamstrings)

All of these can be done for three sets of 12-20 repetitions. Aging tends to shift our muscle fibers to slower twitch, and thus we benefit from higher repetition numbers.

From there, if you have time, you can get some exercises in for your shoulders, biceps, triceps, if you so choose. These are the helper muscles, but the prime movers carry a more functional priority. If you struggle to get to the gym on your own, find someone that has a similar set of goals as you, and invite them to be your training partner. Once you have consistently gone for about a month, you will see significant progress in your strength which will further motivate you to keep consistent as you can see the results of your hard work.

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