

5 Fun Ways to Get into a Strength Training Groove

Strength training, with hand weights, resistance bands, or machines, is not just for body builders or athletes. The benefits of building strong muscles are important for every body - and are even more important as we grow older. Here are five fun ways to get stronger, fitter, and healthier - mentally and physically!

1. Take an MSU Extension StrongWomen™ class.

Classes are taught by trained Extension agents in 15 counties. Download a list of contacts and locations at www.msuextension.org/nutrition/documents/StrongWomenLocations2009.pdf. These highly-rated classes have helped hundreds of participants get stronger and feel better. You'll learn ways to continue strength training on your own at home after the classes are finished.

2. Use the online StrongWomen™ programs.

The developer of *StrongWomen*™ programs, Dr. Miriam Nelson at Tufts University, offers three specific programs (Strong Bones, Vibrant Aging, and Stay Slim) with background info, follow-along exercises, and a daily log at www.strongwomen.com/. If you don't have Internet access, Dr. Nelson has also written numerous books based on the *StrongWomen*™ concepts.

3. Check out local fitness centers and gyms.

Most private clubs and public recreation centers offer strength training programs as part of their services. If you belong to a gym or fitness center, make sure to get complete instructions on the use of all equipment. While simple strength training activities are safe for virtually everyone, get permission from your health care provider if you have any serious illnesses.

4. Invest in a personal trainer.

Individualized strength training programs can be very helpful if you have previous injuries, special needs, or just do better in a one-on-one situation. Make sure that the trainer maintains certification with a national program, such as American Council on Exercise (ACE). Ask for recommendations from other current clients and talk to them about their experiences.

5. Sign up with a training buddy.

Wherever and however you decide to do your strength training, many people do better with a friend. Consider signing up for a group class with a friend or family member; that often makes it easier to get up and go to class when you may not feel like it. Most personal trainers are willing to work with two or three folks at a time as well.