

STRENGTHEN & STRETCH EXERCISES



YOUR CHALLENGE: Dedicate at least two days a week to strengthening and stretching exercises. Report the completion of your goal at www.dmba.com with a simple “yes” or “no.”

WHY DO STRENGTHENING EXERCISES?

Muscle strength is an important part of fitness. It improves body shape and function. Strength training can also build stronger muscles and bones, strengthen connective tissues, reduce the risk of low back pain, high blood pressure, and diabetes, and help control body weight.

Strength training, particularly in conjunction with regular aerobic exercise, can also have a profound impact on your mental and emotional health.

You can do strength training anywhere—at home, the park, or the gym—using exercise bands, free weights, or body weight as resistance. Think outside the box and do what you enjoy.

GENERAL STRENGTHENING GUIDELINES

- Do strength-building exercises—like weight lifting, push-ups, and sit-ups—at least two times each week on nonconsecutive days.
- Choose exercises that strengthen all the major muscle groups of the body—arms, shoulders, chest, back, abdomen, hips, thighs, and lower legs.
- Start with an exercise you can do eight to 12 times before becoming fatigued. When the exercise or weight lifting becomes easy, add more repetitions or weights.
- Use good form when you lift weights. Go through a full range of motion. Move in a steady, controlled manner.
- Perform one to three sets of each exercise to the point of intentional fatigue while maintaining good form.
- If you're exercising at a gym, find a trainer to show

you how to use the gym equipment correctly. Or for videos and picture demonstrations, go to www.sparkpeople.com.

WHY DO YOU NEED TO STRETCH?

Flexibility allows you to scratch your back or bend down to pick up your shoes. Doing stretching exercises regularly can help you maintain flexibility and a good range of motion in your major joints.

It can also improve circulation, relieve stress, and make it easier for you to perform activities of daily living (housekeeping, gardening, and shopping, for example). Stretching can also help prevent serious injury.

You need to be flexible to perform a variety of tasks that require bending, twisting, and reaching. But that doesn't mean you should strive to be a contortionist. Both extreme flexibility and inflexibility often mean



a higher incidence of muscular injury. The ultimate goal? A moderate level of flexibility—one that lets you engage in normal activities with ease.

GENERAL STRETCHING GUIDELINES

- Stretch after an aerobic activity while muscles are still warm and pliable.
- Stretch all major muscle groups: neck, shoulders, back, hips, and legs.
- Stretch slowly to a full range of motion without pain.
- Avoid bouncing or fast movements.
- Hold each stretch for 15 to 30 seconds to get the maximum benefit.
- Do two to four stretches per muscle group.
- Aim for at least two stretching sessions a week.
- Avoid stretches that cause pain in a joint.
- Remember to breathe while stretching.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

- American Heart Association <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living>
- WebMD <https://www.webmd.com/living-healthy>
- CDC Healthy Living <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyliving/index.html>

Note: If you can't complete this challenge because of a medical condition, let us know and we'll come up with an alternative for you.

