

Starting Strong

A no-gym beginner's guide to resistance training

Resistance training is not only for weight lifters—and it does not require a gym.

It simply means asking your muscles to work against a force. That force can come from your body weight, a wall, a chair, a resistance band, a water bottle or a can of soup.

Building strength now can help you continue doing the things you want to do later: climb stairs, carry groceries, travel, get up from the floor, support your bones and remain independent.

Before you begin

Ask your healthcare provider whether you need individualized guidance before beginning, especially if you have osteoporosis, a recent fracture or surgery, chest pain, unexplained shortness of breath, dizziness, uncontrolled blood pressure, significant joint pain, a neurological condition or another medical concern.

Stop exercising and seek appropriate medical care if you develop chest pain, fainting, severe shortness of breath or a sudden concerning symptom.

What you need

- A stable chair that will not slide
- A clear space near a wall or countertop
- Two water bottles or cans of soup
- Comfortable clothing and supportive footwear
- Optional: a resistance band

Your simple starter routine

Begin twice per week on nonconsecutive days. Start with one set of 8–12 controlled repetitions of each exercise. Rest as needed. When that feels comfortable and your form remains good, work toward two sets.

1. Chair sit-to-stand

Sit near the front of a stable chair with your feet about hip-width apart. Lean slightly forward, press through your feet and stand. Lower yourself back to the chair with control. Use your hands for support if needed.

2. Wall or countertop push-up

Place your hands against a wall or sturdy countertop. Keep your body in a straight line as you bend your elbows and bring your chest toward the surface. Press away with control. A wall is easier; a lower surface is more challenging.

3. Supported step-up

Use the bottom stair or a low, stable step. Hold a rail or stable surface as needed. Step up with one foot, bring the other foot up and step down carefully. Alternate the leading leg.

4. Water-bottle row

Hold a water bottle or light household item in each hand. Hinge slightly forward from the hips while keeping your back comfortable and long. Pull your elbows back as though placing them into your back pockets, then lower slowly.

5. Water-bottle overhead press

Hold the bottles near shoulder height. Press them overhead only through a comfortable, pain-free range, then lower with control. If overhead movement is not appropriate for you, ask your provider or exercise professional for an alternative.

6. Calf raise

Stand behind a chair or at a countertop. Rise onto the balls of your feet, pause, then lower slowly. Use the surface for balance—not to pull yourself upward.

7. Carry

Hold a light grocery bag, water jug or other manageable object at your side. Stand tall and walk slowly through a clear area. Switch sides. Stop before your grip or posture fails.

How hard should it feel?

The last few repetitions should feel challenging but controlled. You should still be able to maintain good form and breathe normally. Sharp pain, dizziness or an alarming symptom is not a normal part of the workout.

How to make progress

Change only one thing at a time:

- Add one or two repetitions.
- Add a second set.
- Use a slightly heavier water bottle or household object.
- Move more slowly and with greater control.
- Progress from a wall push-up to a countertop push-up.
- Reduce hand support during a chair stand or balance exercise when safe.

Progress should feel gradual—not like a test you have to pass.

Do not forget the other pieces

Walk or perform another aerobic activity

Walking supports the heart, lungs, endurance, mood and blood-sugar regulation. It complements resistance training but does not replace it.

Practice balance

With a sturdy surface within reach, practice standing with your feet closer together or briefly lifting one foot. Ask for professional guidance if you are unsteady or have a history of falls.

Maintain mobility

After you are warm, gently move through comfortable ranges at the ankles, hips, upper back and shoulders. Stretching should create mild tension—not pain.

Support recovery

Sleep, nutritious food, adequate protein, appropriate hydration and recovery time help your body respond to training. Tell your provider if fatigue, poor sleep, pain, hot flashes or other symptoms are making it difficult to stay active.

Beginner-friendly apps

App features and prices can change. Review the current terms and ask your provider whether the workouts are appropriate for you.

- **FitOn**

Offers beginner, strength, mobility, yoga and no-equipment home workouts. A free option is available.

fitonapp.com

- **Nike Training Club**

Offers guided workouts that can be filtered by level, duration, focus and available equipment.

nike.com/ntc-app

- **Caliber**

Provides strength-training plans, exercise demonstrations and workout tracking. A free version is available, with optional paid coaching and features.

caliberstrong.com/workout-app

- **Peloton App / Peloton Strength+**

Includes bodyweight and strength classes with guided demonstrations. Membership options and trial terms vary.

onepeloton.com/app

A realistic first-week goal

- Complete this routine on two nonconsecutive days.
- Take at least one walk or complete another enjoyable aerobic activity.
- Practice five minutes of mobility or stretching on two days.
- Write down what felt easy, difficult or uncomfortable.
- Bring your questions to your provider.

Provider's notes

Exercises to avoid or modify: _____

Recommended frequency: _____

Recommended resistance or equipment: _____

Referral or follow-up plan: _____

Other instructions: _____

This resource provides general education and is not a substitute for individualized medical care, physical therapy or exercise instruction. Your provider may recommend a different starting plan based on your health, medications, symptoms, injuries and fitness level.