



# Strength Training for Older Adults

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## Introduction

This document provides an introduction to strength training exercises for older adults. Leaders of nutrition education programs at congregate meal sites can use this information to demonstrate the exercises. The leader should try the stretches and exercises to become familiar with them before introducing to a group of older adults.

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## Why weight resistance or strength training

Strength training is important for older adults to maintain health and independence. Resistance exercises can help:

- decrease risk of falling and injuries,
  - improve cardiovascular fitness,
  - increase activity level and flexibility,
  - prevent low back pain,
  - reduce stress,
  - improve digestion and prevent constipation,
  - increase energy level,
  - improve sleep, and
  - make you feel better about yourself.
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## Doing strength training

Exercise is necessary to maintain muscle mass. Inactivity causes the body to lose muscle mass and gain fat.

Resistance exercises in the examples help build muscles by working out using the resistance of large rubber bands. These exercises are most effective when performed 3 days a week. The most important aspect of strength building exercise is the intensity with which it is performed. If the stretch exercise can be repeated more than 15 times without tiring, it is too easy and will not make the muscle stronger.

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## Benefits of stretching

The first step of strength training is stretching. Stretching has many benefits.

- It increases flexibility and coordination and helps the body move more freely.
- It helps prevent stiffness and injuries to joints and muscles.

### **Important:**

1. Stretch before and after every workout.
  2. Hold your stretches for 6 to 15 seconds.
  3. Feel some stretch, but not pain.
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## Strength Training for Older Adults, Continued

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**Basic stretches** Below are directions for three basic stretches.

<b>Stretch</b>	<b>Description</b>
Neck stretch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Turn head gently to one side as if to look over your right shoulder.</li><li>2. Hold for 6 to 15 seconds.</li><li>3. Turn head to look over left shoulder.</li><li>4. Repeat 2 to 4 times on each side.</li></ol>
Shoulder stretch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Stretch left arm across the front of your body. Use your right hand to gently pull your left elbow toward the right.</li><li>2. Hold for 6 to 15 seconds.</li><li>3. Repeat using the right arm across the body.</li><li>4. Repeat 2 to 4 times.</li></ol>
Side stretch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Stand with feet apart and reach toward the ceiling with right hand. Feel the stretch in the muscles along the right side.</li><li>2. Hold for 6 to 15 seconds.</li><li>3. Repeat with left arm.</li><li>4. Repeat 2 to 4 times on each side.</li></ol>

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## Using Stretch Bands for Strength Training

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### **Introduction**

These exercises are adapted from Evans, W. *Fitness from 50 forward: A manual describing how to begin and continue an exercise program*. The American Dietetic Association. Chicago, IL. 1998.

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### **Guidelines for using stretch bands**

Use the following guidelines when using the stretch bands:

- Always stretch before exercising.
  - Maintain good posture and pull in stomach muscles.
  - Control the band by resisting it.
  - Do not allow your limbs to move freely or sloppily.
  - Do not overextend or lock your joints.
  - Make sure your position would not allow the band to snap toward your head if you accidentally let go.
  - Breathe while you exercise.
  - Do not store bands in direct sunlight. If bands get sticky, sprinkle them with talcum powder.
  - Rest 1 to 2 seconds between repetitions, 1 to 2 seconds between sets, and at least 2 to 3 minutes between different exercises. Each lift should take 8 seconds- 2 seconds up, 2 seconds hold, and 4 seconds down.
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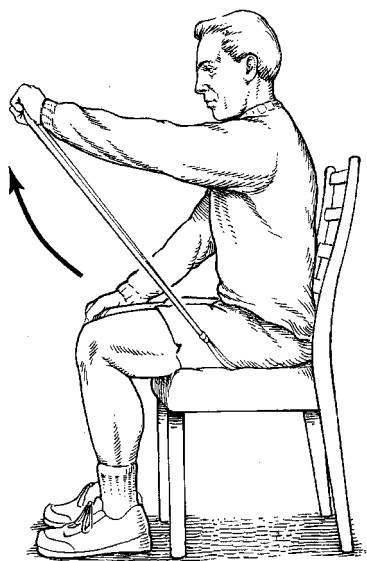
## Using Stretch Bands for Strength Training, Continued

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### **Chest and shoulder exercise**

This exercise increases the strength to your deltoid muscles. Doing this exercise will make it easier for you to get objects from your kitchen cupboards.

- Sit on one end of your stretch band and grab the other end with the nearer hand, with your palm facing forward. Raise your hand forward to shoulder height. (You may have difficulty sitting on the band. Try putting one hand through one end of the band and resting that hand on your knee and pull up as below.)
- Count 2 seconds up, hold for 2 seconds, and 4 seconds down.
- Work up to 3 sets of 5 to 15 repetitions using each arm. Rest a few minutes between sets.



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## Using Stretch Bands for Strength Training, Continued

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### Upper arm exercise

This exercise strengthens the triceps and shoulder muscles. These muscles are used for pushing activities, such as using your arms to get out of a chair.

- While seated, grip one end of the band in each hand. Place right hand on left hip. Using left hand, lift the band over your head so that it is behind your back and your left ear. Slowly extend your left hand upward towards the ceiling. Keep the palm toward your head and your elbow in front of you, level with your ear. Keeping the upper part of your arm still; bend and straighten your elbow.
- Count 2 seconds up, hold for 2 seconds, and 4 seconds down.
- Work up to 3 sets of 5 to 15 repetitions using each arm. Rest a few minutes between sets.





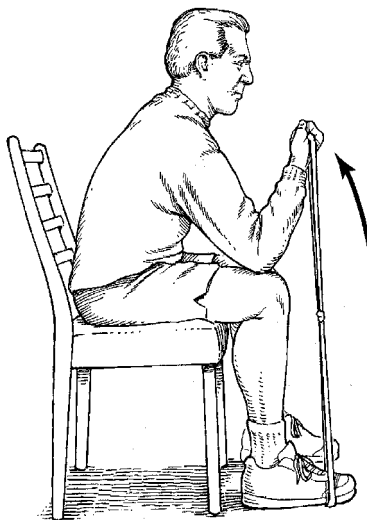
## Using Stretch Bands for Strength Training, Continued

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### **Bicep curl**

This exercise strengthens the muscles needed for lifting (such as lifting bags of groceries).

- Sit on a chair and place one end of the band under your right foot. Hold the other end with your right hand, palm facing up. Bend your elbow until your hand is at shoulder height.
- Count 2 seconds up, hold for 2 seconds, and 4 seconds down.
- Work up to 3 sets of 5 to 15 repetitions using each arm. Rest a few minutes between sets.



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## Using Stretch Bands for Strength Training, Continued

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### **Knee flexion**

This exercise straightens the hamstring muscles. These muscles are important for walking and maintaining your balance while standing.

- Loop the band around your right ankle. Stand on the other end of the band with your left foot. Hold the back of a chair or a counter for support.
- Lift your right foot behind you until it is at knee level. Lower your foot to the starting position.
- It is important to keep your knees close together. If the leg you are lifting comes forward, you will exercise the muscle in front of the leg instead of the ones in back. If the top of the leg moves back as you lift, you may hurt your back.
- Count 2 seconds up, hold for 2 seconds, and 4 seconds down.
- Work up to 3 sets of 5 to 15 repetitions using each leg. Rest a few minutes between sets.

