



Strength Training is for Over 50s too.

There is growing interest in strength training as an exercise for older people. You may have read about it in the newspapers, or seen something on TV or maybe even your doctor has mentioned it. Perhaps you know someone who does it.

Strength training can help you stay healthier and independent in older age. It's a fact. If you're interested in finding out more, or even better, in taking it up, then read on.

What is strength training?

It is a series of progressive exercises that work the muscles, bones and joints using resistance. Resistance can include free weights, hand and ankle weights, machine weights, or your own body weight. The aim is to strengthen muscles, retain bone density and increase joint flexibility.



Will I end up with big muscles?

No. Your muscles will become better defined and your body fat will be reduced. Regular strength training improves flexibility, balance, heart health and the strength and function of muscles and bones.

Isn't strength training just for young people?

No. Many older people do strength training. It is estimated that over 10,000 Victorian seniors do regular strength training.



I already walk and do other exercise, isn't that enough?

Research shows that for maximum benefit we need to do a range of exercise to maintain strength, flexibility and balance, as well as cardiovascular health.

So what are the benefits?

Strength training helps reduce the risk of and better manage many health conditions including osteoporosis, arthritis, diabetes, chronic heart disease, depression and anxiety. People have more strength and energy, and are better able to undertake the tasks of daily life with confidence and ease.

Do I have to be strong enough to do it?

No. Strength training can help even if you are frail. Age is no barrier either. The body responds to strength training no matter what your age or fitness level. People with a medical condition or who have been inactive should consult their doctor first.



How often do I need to do it?

For maximum benefit you should attend two, if possible three times a week for up to one hour at a time.

What happens in a strength training class?

You will start with weights that are comfortable and progress at your own pace with advice from the instructor. As your muscles get stronger you will be able to increase the weight. Even in a group setting you should progress at your own pace.

Is it expensive?

It doesn't have to be. Cost depends on many factors such as the type of program, level of supervision, qualifications of the instructor, type of equipment available and whether the program is subsidised.

What should I look for in a program?

A qualified instructor, well maintained equipment and a supportive environment. Programs endorsed as *Living Longer Living Stronger* and *Lift for Life* meet these requirements.

Can I do it on my own?

To get the full benefit and ensure you do it properly it's best to do it under supervision of a qualified person. Also doing it with others helps with motivation. Many gyms and community health centres offer group programs.



Where can I do it?

Facilities that offer strength training for older people include health and fitness centres, YMCA Sports and Recreation Centres, Council Leisure Centres, Community Health Centres, Neighbourhood Houses and some hospitals.

How do I find out more?

Details of programs are on the 'Go for your life' website at www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au or telephone the Infoline **1300 739 899**. Council on the Ageing (COTA) Vic telephone **1300 135 090** has a list of endorsed programs.

If you have a medical condition you may wish to contact the International Diabetes Institute on **(03) 9258 5042** or Arthritis Victoria on **1800 011 041**.