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B U L L E T I N

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The Strong Woman Workout

It's a classic moment of hesitation for many women: You're at the gym standing between the barbells and the treadmill, knowing you really should lift weights

regularly. But instead of picking up a hand weight or starting a set of lunges, you opt for cardio again.

If you're uncertain about what to do after a basic arm curl or how to use those complicated weight machines, don't let that stand in your way. By learning (and doing) some simple weight-lifting exercises, you'll improve your overall fitness, which can enhance your quality of life.

We normally lose muscle mass with age. Strength training with weights or resistance bands builds muscles and strengthens bones, which helps prevent osteoporosis, improve balance and coordination, and reduce injuries from falls.

Plus, resistance training helps stave off a host of other health problems, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression, back pain and arthritis, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And don't worry that lifting

weights will make you bulky. It actually will help you tone up and tighten those jiggly trouble spots.

Before You Get Started

Strength training isn't something you need to do every day. The National Institutes on Aging recommends aiming for at least two half-hour strength workouts a week, and suggests taking a day or two to rest in between workouts to allow your muscles time to recuperate.

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ISSUE
FOCUS

Women's Health

Take a Deep Breath ... It's Good for You!

Want a simple trick to improve your health that's free, easy and can be done anywhere, anytime? Don't hold your breath. Instead, practice deep breathing as part of your daily routine.

Breathing and relaxation exercises can help lower blood pressure, reduce hot flashes related to menopause, ease stress and lower risk for several diseases, says the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

Carve out 10 to 15 minutes every day for deep breathing exercises, whether it's in bed before you get up for the day, during your lunch hour, or as a way to unwind before hitting the hay.

The technique is simple. To start: Sit up straight or lie down, fill your lungs slowly and completely, letting your belly rise with each breath. Then slowly exhale. Try relaxing muscle groups while breathing for greater stress relief. Just focus on releasing tension in one part of the body with each breath. Start with your toes and work your way up to your head. ■



The Strong Woman Workout

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Follow these guidelines to get the most from your workout and avoid injury.

- > Warm up and cool down to prevent muscle soreness.
- > Focus on form rather than speed to avoid injury.
- > Pay attention to your body. If a muscle or joint starts to hurt, give it a rest.
- > Take a short breather between sets of repetitions to maintain good form.
- > Stay hydrated.
- > Work out with a friend for motivation or help while doing certain exercises.



To Barbell or Not to Barbell?

Hand weights are very effective for building strength, but they aren't your only option. Resistance bands are an excellent alternative to free weights, and they travel well. Full water bottles or soup cans can be used as hand weights in a pinch.

No equipment? No problem! The weight of your own body can be enough if you do the right moves. Think pushups, lunges and squats.

Start a weight-bearing program with light weights and gradually increase the weight over time. Shoot for two sets of 10 to 15 repetitions of each move. If you can't complete at least eight repetitions of an exercise, try a lighter weight or a band with more give.

This sample total body workout is a good place to start:

Wrist curls: With your forearm on a flat surface, hold a light weight in your hand, palm up. Slowly bend your wrist up, hold, then slowly lower back down.

Wall push-ups: Stand about an arm's length away from a wall and plant your hands against it at shoulder height.

Lower your chest toward the wall with your body straight, hold, then return to standing.

Bicep curls with a resistance band: Sit in a straight-backed chair, feet shoulder-width apart. Holding the band's handles, place the center of a resistance band under your feet. One arm at a time, bring

your wrist toward your shoulder, hold, then slowly lower back down. Repeat with the other arm.

Lunges: With or without weights in each hand, step one foot forward, then lower your back knee toward the floor. Straighten your back leg, then take a step forward. Repeat with the other leg.

Back leg raises: Hold onto the back of a sturdy chair or counter. Keeping the leg straight, lift one leg slightly backward. Then bend the knee and bring the foot toward your rear end. Slowly lower your foot back to the floor. Repeat with the other leg.

Toe stands: Holding onto a chair or counter, lift up onto your toes, hold, then slowly lower back down. ■

The Basics on Autoimmune Disorders

Getting to the root of an autoimmune disorder can be tricky and trying. Symptoms come and go, vary in intensity, and even seem unrelated. Many symptoms associated with autoimmune diseases, like fatigue, dizziness or low-grade fever also are common for a wide range of health issues.

What is an autoimmune disorder?

Autoimmune disorders occur when your immune system goes awry and attacks healthy tissues in your body, mistaking these tissues for harmful

antigens like bacteria, viruses or foreign substances. These attacks can target the nervous system, thyroid, skin, joints, digestive tract, muscles and more.

Scientists have identified more than 80 types of autoimmune disorders, and many strike women more often than men. Multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, Grave's disease, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis and celiac disease are a few examples of autoimmune disorders.

Sadly, most autoimmune disorders are not curable, but symptoms may be manageable with treatment.

How do you improve your chances of getting a quick diagnosis?

Diagnosing autoimmune diseases can take trial and error and often involve

numerous medical tests and even multiple doctors and specialists. These tips from the U.S. Office on Women's Health can help you and your doctor pinpoint the source of your problem.

> Record your family health history, including that of extended family. Share it with your doctors.

> Keep a symptom journal. Write down even those symptoms that seem unrelated or minor, and share the list with your doctor. Try H2U's new AskMD app.

> Determine which symptoms are most troublesome and see a specialist. If you struggle with stomach problems, for instance, visit a gastroenterologist.

> Don't give up. If you need a second, third or fourth opinion, don't be afraid to seek them out. ■

Work Out the Kinks, Gals (and Guys!)

Does your neck feel like you are carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders? Both sexes are prone to neck pain, but women are more likely to suffer neck problems, says a Swedish study. The researchers also found perceived stress was directly related to neck pain.

Fortunately, you can usually ease neck pain with simple, tension-relieving stretches. Don't forget to stretch and strengthen your chest muscles, too. Believe it or not,

weak chest muscles can lead to a sore neck because lack of chest strength causes the shoulders to pull forward, which can strain the neck.

HOLD EACH OF THESE MOVES FOR 30 SECONDS:

The nape. Sit with your back straight. Clasp your hands behind your neck. Slowly tuck your chin toward your chest. Add gentle pressure by pulling your elbows toward the ground.

Sides of the neck. Sit with your back straight. Tilt your head to the right. Use your right hand to very gently pull your right ear toward the top of your shoulder. Repeat on the other side.

Tops of shoulders. Knit your fingers together, palms facing your body. Raise your arms straight in front of you. Pull your hands as far out from your body as you can. Round your back to deepen the stretch.

Chest. Stand in a corner of the room. Place each palm on a wall with your arms shoulder-height at a 90-degree angle. Lean forward into the corner keeping your face forward. Move your hands slightly up or down the wall and repeat to deepen the stretch.

Do these stretches as part of your daily routine to prevent neck pain in the first place. And of course, remember to practice proper posture! Stooping, slumping and craning all will result in achy muscles. ■



Pack a Pet First-aid Kit

If you tote furry friends on your travels, be sure to carry first-aid items for them as well. The Humane Society recommends packing the following in a waterproof case:

Important Info and Documents:

- > phone numbers for the nearest vet, emergency pet services and poison control hotline
- > vaccination documents and medical records
- > list of medications and dosages
- > a current photo of your pet
- > pet first-aid book
- > temporary ID tag

Health and Safety Items:

- > nylon leash and pet carrier
- > self-cling bandage (won't stick to fur)
- > tweezers, scissors and nail clippers
- > muzzle or strips of cloth to prevent biting
- > hydrogen peroxide (to induce vomiting, not to clean wounds)
- > saline solution and bulb syringe to clean wounds
- > antibacterial wipes, gauze, cotton balls or swabs
- > blanket and extra towels
- > latex gloves
- > rectal thermometer and petroleum jelly
- > medicine approved by your vet ■



A Parfait Breakfast

Here's a sweet reason to pick more berries this spring: Recent research shows that women who eat three or more servings of berries each week have a lower risk for heart attack (*Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*).

This mouthwatering breakfast parfait gives you a double dose of heart-healthy ingredients by combining cholesterol-lowering oats with berries.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup quick-cooking steel-cut oats
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 1 tsp. lime juice
- ½ cup raspberries
- ½ cup blueberries

Directions

Lightly toast the oats in a skillet over medium heat. Allow to cool, then mix them together with the yogurt, honey and lime juice. Let them sit in the refrigerator overnight. Layer the yogurt and oat mixture with the berries in two tall glasses and serve immediately. Makes two servings.

Nutrition Information: Calories 240, Total fat 6 g, Carbs 36 g, Sodium 39 mg, Sugars 18 g ■

H2U Co-Sponsors New Health App

H2U and its parent company, HCA, have partnered to launch AskMD, a free app for iPhones and iPads. AskMD helps users get organized around their health, enabling more productive doctor visits.

Use this handy symptom checker to collect information about your symptoms by answering a series of easy questions. Then review the list of possible causes along with information on treatment. The app also can connect you to local doctors and specialists qualified to treat your problems.

AskMD uses clinically proven research to help you get from wondering what could be wrong to knowing what you can do about it. The app also has features to help you understand and manage your day-to-day health, including a place to record notes for doctors' appointments and to list your prescription meds.

The AskMD app is available free from the Apple App Store. An Android version is due out later this year. ■



Monthly Challenge

Cook Once, Eat Twice

Try this creative approach to dinner planning, which can cut your kitchen time while doubling the number of home-cooked meals you have every week.

How it works: Plan your meals so you cook extra portions of certain ingredients that you can remake into another meal later in the week. Or freeze the extra food for a quick fix on a busy night next month.

A sample week of dinners: On Sunday, roast two whole chickens with in-season vegetables like broccoli, carrots, celery and turnips. Shred leftover chicken; freeze half



and use the rest with the leftover veggies in a hearty soup on Monday. Tuesday night, broil a piece of salmon in a simple maple glaze and serve over a salad of fresh greens and nuts. On Wednesday, fold leftover salmon into breadcrumbs and egg whites to make salmon cakes. Thursday night, go meatless with roasted vegetables over creamy polenta, then use the extra veggies as the base for lasagna on Friday. Thaw the remaining shredded chicken on Saturday for easy chicken tacos.

By taking this challenge, you'll not only save time and money, but you'll also have more control over the ingredients in your meals, which may spur you to make healthier choices all day long. ■

