

Steps to LivingWell

As you age you lose lean muscle mass. After age forty-five, you lose about 1 percent of muscle mass a year, which translates roughly to a half pound. Unfortunately people tend to replace this with fat weight. Also, not surprisingly, research shows that with loss of muscle comes loss of strength, which may prevent you from doing some of the activities you enjoy. Attempting to shed weight through diet can also trigger a further loss of muscle. Adding exercise to the equation however, can set you up for success. The only way to reverse muscle decline is to build muscle through exercise and strength training. The good news is that you can usually see results pretty quickly.

A strength training program should include exercises for all major muscle groups. In general, start with light weights that allow you to perform an exercise with good form (you can maintain the proper body position and control the weight) at least 8 times in a row. If you can't, switch to a lighter weight. Varying the exercises that you do also keeps your muscles from getting used to the familiar movements, and ensures that you'll continue seeing results from your efforts. Balance and strengthening exercises; particularly for your core abdominal muscles and lower body, are key in to preventing falls. Keeping these muscle groups strong will give you more control over your body, train balance and improve your coordination.

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