- Food / Nutrition

30 DAYS TO Getting Stronger

Food for strength

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News flash! Building a strong body is as much about the food we eat as the exercise we do; this is what we need to know before we get started

Modern life has shackled us to our desks and screens, making building strength and resilience, both inside and out, more essential than ever. Strength is the secret sauce for those who want to move better, feel better, and live with more energy and confidence. Strong is the new fit, but not in a 'lift heavy, grunt louder' gym bunny or bodybuilder kind of way; it's for everyone.

Building strength is a lifelong journey, with different focuses depending on your stage of life. In your 20s and 30s, it's about laying the foundation, developing muscle mass, supporting bone growth, and establishing healthy movement habits that will carry you forward. In midlife, strength training helps counteract natural muscle loss (sarcopenia) and bone density decline, supporting joint health and metabolic function as hormones shift. In later years, maintaining strength is key to preserving balance, preventing falls and fractures, and staying independent and active for as long as possible

Strength protects your bones, supports your joints, improves balance, and reduces the risk of injury. Research shows that combining resistance exercise with balance work can cut fall risk by up to 30 per cent in older adults (Gillespie et al., 2019). Staying strong means staying vibrant, confident, and able to keep doing the things you love.

Chicken and egg

Muscle and bone health depend on the powerful partnership between smart nutrition and consistent movement. Exercise challenges your muscles to grow and adapt, while nutrition, especially adequate protein, calcium, and vitamin D, fuels recovery and rebuilds tissues. One doesn't work as well without the other.

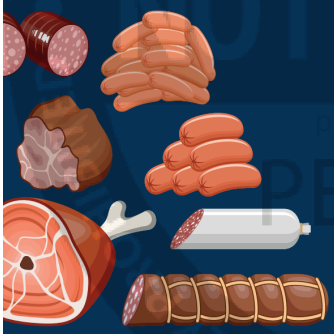
So how does food fit in?

Building strength without the right fuel is like trying to renovate a house without the right building materials. Whether you're lifting weights, walking the dog, doing pilates or gardening (yes, gardening is fantastic exercise!), your body needs nutrients to repair, recover and grow stronger.

Muscle is made of protein, but also water, amino acids, and a whole host of vitamins and minerals that help your body do its job behind the scenes. When you eat well, you don't just give your body the energy it needs, you give it the tools to stay strong from the inside out.













Why strength matters (even if you're not into the gym)

Let's bust a myth: strength doesn't have to mean bulking up or hitting the gym every day. It's about maintaining, or building, the muscle that you already have.

From about the age of 30, we all start to lose muscle mass naturally. This process, called sarcopenia, speeds up over time and especially for women during perimenopause and beyond. The result? Everyday things like climbing stairs, carrying shopping bags or lifting kids or grandchildren can feel harder than they should.

Diet plays a huge role in supporting and maintaining muscle mass. You could call it your 'toolkit'. Without the right nutrition, your body doesn't have what it needs to build or maintain lean muscle tissue, no matter how many workouts you do.

The role of food in strength-building

Strength training works by gently breaking down muscle tissue. That's not a bad thing, it's where the magic starts! Your body responds with muscle protein synthesis, the repair and rebuild process that makes those muscles stronger, fitter and more capable. This is when nutrition comes in: your body can't build something out of nothing. To make gains, you need the right nutrients in your system to construct that new muscle tissue, especially protein, along with enough energy from carbohydrate and healthy fats to fuel the repair.

Muscle is more metabolically active than fat, so keeping your lean tissue topped up supports a healthy metabolism without extreme dieting or obsessive exercise.

Getting the right calories, and enough of them

What you eat, and how much, is essential in making muscle gains. Lifting and doing strength training without adequate nutrition can actually lead to loss of muscle tissue.

It's not just a question of protein though. If you eat enough protein, but not enough overall calories, you'll struggle to be able to work out to build more muscle.

If you eat plenty of calories, but too much junk (i.e. empty calories) and not sufficient protein, your body won't be able to build up muscle tissue and will gain fat instead.

Let's start with protein, the star of the show. You need to eat enough protein, consistently, to support muscle repair and growth. It's not just about how much it's also about when and what kind. More on that soon.

Your protein intake needs to be supplemented by a whole host of other nutrients too. Calcium and vitamin D for bone strength. Magnesium for muscle function. Iron for energy. Omega-3s to help reduce inflammation and keep joints healthy. Antioxidants and fibre to support recovery and reduce oxidative stress.

You're much more likely to get these nutrients from a balanced and varied diet than from a protein shake!

Stronger on the outside, stronger on the inside!

Building strength isn't solely about aesthetics; research shows that strength training supported by a healthy diet improves not only physical, but also mental and emotional wellbeing. Gains include better posture and core, fewer back problems, deeper and more restful sleep, more energy, reduced stress and anxiety levels, greater emotional resilience, a deeper sense of confidence and control.