



Strength training is great to build lean muscle and raise your metabolism. This 3 day plan is perfect for **Beginners** and those with **busy Lifestyles** who have access to gym equipment.

Be sure to warm up the body with light cardio (5 - 10 minutes on a treadmill or bike) before starting the program.

It is also good to do one or 2 sets with very light weight for the body part you are about to start training.

Chose 3 days to stick to this program. For example, this workout is done on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and is broken down like this:

Day 1. Chest, Shoulders, Abs

Day 2. Rest

Day 3. Back and Triceps, Abs

Day 4. Rest

Day 5. Legs, Biceps, Abs,

Day 6. Rest

Day 7. Rest

Workout # 1

Perform 1 - 2 sets of Warm-up exercise before every first set using 40-50% of max weight.

Monday

Chest

Flat Bench Press, 3 sets- Flat bench emphasizes middle and lower fibers of the chest.

Starting Position

Lie back on bench. Your feet should be either flat on the floor, flat on a foot rest, or up in the air to protect your lower back from injury. Hold a weighted barbell or dumbbells with arms straight up toward the ceiling.

If using a fit ball start from a seated position. Slowly walk out until your head and shoulders are supported by the ball . Your feet should be slightly further than hip width apart. Dumbbells are recommended if using a fit ball. Start with the dumbbells at a 90 degree angle at your elbow, palms facing away from your body.

Action

INHALE: Allow elbows to bend to 90 degrees, lowering the barbell or dumbbells down toward your chest (but not touching it).

EXHALE: Extend the arms, pushing the weight back up to the starting position. Don't lock elbows completely.

Special Instructions

Keep spine in a neutral position. Don't lift head off the bench during exercise.

Incline Bench Press - Incline press emphasizes the upper chest fibers.

Starting Position

Using an incline bench (set between 1 - 5 depending on the bench). Lie back on bench. Your feet should be either flat on the floor, flat on a foot rest, or up in the air to protect your lower back from injury. Hold a weighted barbell or dumbbells with arms straight up toward the ceiling.

Action

INHALE: Allow elbows to bend to 90 degrees, lowering the barbell or dumbbells down toward your chest (but not touching it).

EXHALE: Extend the arms, pushing the weight back up to the starting position. Don't lock elbows completely.

Special Instructions

Keep spine in a neutral position. Don't lift head off the bench during exercise.

Dumbbell Fly - Works chest muscles, shoulder and some triceps.

Starting Position

Lie flat on a bench. Hold dumbbells with arms extended and elbows slightly bent. If using a fit ball lie on ball with your legs bent and feet flat. Keep your upper body in a straight line and your hips raised.

Action

INHALE: Lower dumbbells until elbows are at shoulder height.

EXHALE: Raise the dumbbells up until they meet.

Special Instructions

A narrow bench will allow free movement of the shoulders. This is not an exercise for heavy weights. Keeping arms slightly bent will less the stress on the elbow.

Push ups - target chest, shoulders and triceps all in one exercise

Starting Position

Start with hands shoulder width apart on the floor and up on your toes, so that your body is supported, keeping your body as straight as possible. Option: for an easier version start with knees on the floor.

Action

EXHALE: Bend your elbows and lower chest to 90 degrees at the elbows.

INHALE: Push up so that your arms are straight, making sure your elbows aren't

completely locked.

Try doing 2 sets of 10-12 repetitions.

Special Instructions

Don't lock elbows out completely. Look straight ahead and keep spine in a neutral position.

Shoulders

Shoulder Press - targets the top and center of your shoulder.

Starting Position

Begin by sitting on a bench or fit ball with your feet firmly planted on the ground. Option to stand with feet hip width apart and spine neutral. Keep your abdominal muscles tight and hold dumbbells to the side of your head, palms facing away from your body, and elbows at 90 degrees. Palms can face in for an easier version.

Action

EXHALE: Raise dumbbells slightly in front of your head and above your head until you touch the ends of each dumbbell together. Your arms should be as straight as possible and you should not lock your elbows.

INHALE: Bring your arms and the dumbbells back down to the starting position.

Special Instructions

If you feel pinching in your shoulders as you raise the dumbbells, bring the dumbbells more out in front of your head. Keep your spine straight and continue to look forward during the exercise. Performing this activity in front of a mirror will help you with your form.

Lateral Raise - works center of shoulder

Starting Position

Stand with feet slightly apart, back straight, arms hanging at your sides. Hold a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing inward.

Action

EXHALE: Raise the dumbbells at your sides to shoulder level, keeping elbows slightly bent.

INHALE: Lower slowly with control to the starting position to complete one rep. Alternate sides for an easier version. Try this seated on a bench or a fit ball for variety.

Special Instructions

Do not let the momentum of your swinging arms do all the work-- keep the movement controlled. Be sure you are not leaning back when lifting the weights.

Abdominals - Use Variety!

Abdominal Crunches - basic fundamental exercise that works all of your abdominal muscles.

Starting Position

Lie on the floor or a mat on your back, with knees bent and hands behind head. Feet should be flat on the ground. Keep a space between your chin and chest (looking diagonal towards the ceiling).

Action

EXHALE: Raise your chest until your shoulder blades lift off the floor.

INHALE: Slowly lower back to floor.

Special Instructions

Don't use your hands and arms to help lift you up - use abdominals and hips.

Crunches on a Fit Ball - Greater range of motion increases strength in the abs for this exercise.

Starting Position

Begin by sitting on top of the Swiss ball. Roll in the direction your head is pointed until your lower back is supported by the curve of the ball. You can either cross your arms over your chest or place your hands behind your ears. Do not put them behind the head or clasp them together behind your head.

Action

EXHALE: Crunch forward, using your abdominals, until you are at approximately a 45 degree angle to the ball. Keep your neck in a neutral position.

INHALE: Lower yourself back to the starting position, where your head wraps back around the ball. Try doing 2 sets of 15 crunches to start.

Special Instructions

Keep space in-between your chin and chest, so your spine stays in a neutral position. Balance yourself on the ball with as much upper body weight off the ball as possible without falling over backwards.

Crunches with a Twist - Works all abdominal muscles with an emphasis on obliques. These side muscles provide support when you twist and bend to the side.

Starting Position

Lie on the floor or a mat on your back, with knees bent and hands behind head. Feet should be flat on the ground. Keep a space between your chin and chest (looking diagonal towards the ceiling).

Action

EXHALE: As you lift up, rotate upper body toward one side, then rotate back to center.

INHALE: Lower your back to the floor. Alternate sides.

Special Instructions

Don't use your hands and arms to help lift you up - use abdominals and hips.

Workout # 2

Wednesday

Back

Assisted Chin-ups - targets your back with emphasis on shoulders and biceps.

Starting Position

Follow machine instructions for set up and select desired weight. Grip the handles above your shoulders with palms facing outward. Straighten the arms and place knees on the pad, so that your body is upright and abs are engaged. TIP: The machine may be the kind you step on, instead of kneel on. Follow machine guidelines.

Action

EXHALE: Bend the elbows to lift your body up until chin is above the height of your hands.

INHALE: Slowly straighten the elbows to lower to the start position to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Remember that on this "assisted" machine, when the weight you choose is heavier, you're lifting less of your body weight and the exercise is easier. When the weight you choose is lighter, you're lifting more of your body weight and the exercise is harder. You can experiment with different grips (such as palms facing inward, hands closer, hands wider, etc).

Lat Pull down - try switching grip to give a variety.

Starting Position

Follow machine instructions for set up and select desired weight. Sit so that knees are under pad, feet are flat on floor. Grab the bar, placing hands wider than the shoulders, palms facing forward. Engage abs, keep spine straight, and lean backward just slightly.

Action

EXHALE: Pull the bar down towards your chest by bending the elbows.

INHALE: Slowly release the bar overhead by straightening at the elbows to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Never pull the bar behind your head. When leaning back, make sure spine is straight. When returning to start position, make sure elbows do not lock. Adjust placement on hands on bar if necessary (a closer grip is easier; a wider grip is more challenging).

Seated Rows

Starting Position

Follow machine instructions for set up and select desired weight. Sit so feet are flat on floor, knees are above ankles, abs are engaged, back is straight and front of torso is supported by pad. Grip the handles by reaching in front of you, palms facing each other.

Action

EXHALE: Pull the handles, bending elbows and pointing them behind you as you focus on squeezing your shoulder blades towards each other.

INHALE: Slowly straighten the arms to the starting position to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Keep your arms close to the sides of the body. Make sure your wrists don't bend-- keep them in line with the forearm. Don't let your chest or torso lift away from the pad in front of you.

Back Extension - working on the lower back can help eliminate and prevent lower back pain

Starting Position

Lie facedown, legs together and extended straight, arms bent with hands behind neck, head and neck in a neutral position.

Action

EXHALE: Lift the upper body (chest, shoulders) off of the ground, "crunching" towards the hips. Hold for 1-2 counts at highest position.

INHALE: Slowly lower with control to start to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

This is a very small movement-- don't move further than you can naturally and easily. Keep legs squeezed together, hips on floor. There should be no movement from your hips to your toes.

Back Extension on a fit ball - try this variation of the Back Extension for greater range of motion.

Starting Position

Begin very close to a wall, facing away from it. Pull the ball into your legs as close to your body as possible. Keep your toes firmly on the ground and the soles of your feet flat on the wall behind you. Straighten legs so that weight is evenly distributed between your feet (at the wall) and the ball. Adjust the ball if necessary so that it is under your hips. Place your hands behind your ears or across your chest.

Action

EXHALE: Extend from your hips- Bringing your torso upward toward the wall as high as possible. Hold for 1-3 counts.

INHALE: Slowly return to starting position to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Make sure your feet are flat on the wall and that your weight is pressed into them for stability. As you gain strength move away from the wall.

Triceps

Bench Dips - Challenge: do this on a fit ball

Starting Position

Sit on a bench. Grasp the front edge of seat near thighs. Walk feet forward until hips are slightly bent, legs straight, arms extended (don't lock elbows). Keep feet hip-width apart. Option: Keep knees bent and hips close to the bench as you lower.

Action

INHALE: Bend elbows about 90 degrees and lower hips toward the floor. (If you feel pain in the shoulders, your elbows are bent too much).

EXHALE: Press up until elbows are straight, but not locked.

Special Instructions

Keep weight on your heels (toes up toward ceiling).

Triceps Pull downs

Starting Position

Select desired weight. Stand near right side of cable cross machine, and adjust that pulley to the highest position. Place straight T-bar attachment onto the pulley's carabiner. Stand facing the weight stack with an underhand grip on the bar, arms bent, elbows at your sides, back straight, abs engaged and feet staggered one in front of the other. Step far enough from the weight stack so that the weight is slightly lifted off of the stack when in this start position.

Action

EXHALE: Straighten at the elbows to pull the handlebar down towards the front of the thighs.

INHALE: Slowly return to the start position to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Keep upper arms perfectly still--the only movement should occur at the elbow as it bends and straightens. Make sure the wrists stay in line with the forearm.

Abdominals - Use Variety!

Clamshell Crunch with Ball

Starting Position

Sit on a mat and place a stability ball between your legs (at your calves/ankles). Squeezing the ball in place, lie back onto the floor, keeping your feet just off the ground, knees bent. Make sure your lower back stays planted and your abs are tight. Place your hands lightly behind your ears in a crunch position.

Action

EXHALE: Simultaneously lift your shoulders off the ground and your knees into your chest to perform a double crunch.

INHALE: Slowly return to start to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Don't let momentum swing your knees up for you. Be sure your hands are not lifting your upper body-- concentrate on using abs.

Seated Twist with Medicine Ball

Starting Position

Sit on the floor with feet firmly planted, knees bent, back straight, and hands gripping a medicine ball or dumbbell (not pictured). Bend your elbows and tuck them in at your sides, holding the ball or dumbbell in front of your torso. Keeping a your back straight, lean back (hinging from the hips) until you feel your abs engage. From there, carefully lift your feet off of the floor to balance.

Action

EXHALE: Keeping a perfectly straight back with your abs pulled in tight, rotate your torso to the right as far as you can while maintaining good form (back straight, maintaining balance).

INHALE. Return to the center (start position).

Repeat on the opposite side to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Do not round or arch your back. Focus on the movement coming from the waist, allowing your upper body and arms to follow the twisting motion of the waist.

Make it harder: Use a heavier weight and/or extend your arms straight out in front of you.

Make it easier: Perform this exercise without holding any weight.

Kneeling Rollout with Ball

Starting Position

Kneel in front of the ball. Place your hands atop the Swiss ball and bring your feet off the ground. Bring your navel in toward your spine. Walk your hands out on the ball, moving both the ball and your arms away from your body. Once you feel your abdominal muscles working, you are in the starting position.

Action

Your hands should stay stationary on the ball. Pivot from your knees, bringing your torso and hips forward as the ball rolls away from your knees. Keep moving until your chest drops down, keeping your chest as upright as possible, without hyper extending your lower back. Keep your spine in a neutral position. Hold the furthest position comfortably for a couple seconds and roll back to starting position. Try doing 2 sets with 10-12 repetitions.

Special Instructions

If you feel any strain in your lower back, return to the starting position and check your form. If you continue to feel any strain, stop the exercise.

Workout # 3

Friday

Legs

Squats on Leg Press Machine

Starting Position

Follow machine instructions for set up and select desired weight. Position your body so that feet are hip-width apart, toes pointing forward, knees are above the ankles, back is straight and supported by the pad, and abs are engaged. Make sure your knees and hips are both bent at 90 degrees.

Action

EXHALE: Keeping your weight balanced in your heels, extend your knees to push your body away from the foot stand.

INHALE: Slowly bend the knees to return to the start position (a 90-degree bend at the knees) to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

To protect your joints, never bend deeper than 90 degrees at the knees or hips and don't lock knees when straightening legs. For variety, feet can be placed in various positions (hip-width, wider than hips, toes turned out, etc.), but make sure knees stay above ankles.

OPTION: Squat with Barbell

Starting Position

Place barbell on the rack so that it's just below your shoulder height when standing next to it. Add desired weight plates and safety clips to each end. With your back to the squat rack, place shoulders underneath barbell and hands on barbell, then straighten legs to lift barbell off rack. Take a small step forward so barbell is away from squat rack. Place feet hip-width apart, toes slightly turned outward, abs engaged, and back straight.

Action

INHALE: Bend at the knees (and slightly at the hips) to slowly lower your body towards as if sitting back into a chair. Don't bend deeper than 90 degrees at the knees.

EXHALE: Straighten back up to the starting position to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Make sure your knees do not lock or move in front of the toes. Minimize the amount of forward leaning from the waist and keep chest up. When lifting heavy weights, use a spotter for safety.

Forward Lunge with Dumbbell

Starting Position

Stand with legs slightly apart and a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing in, arms to your sides.

Action

INHALE: Take a big step forward, keeping upper body as straight as possible.

Lunge until the front thigh is parallel to the floor and the back knee approaches the floor. Keep your weight on your heels. Don't allow your knees to cross the plane of your toes

EXHALE: Push off and return back to the starting position to complete one rep. Complete all reps on this side and then switch.

Special Instructions

Make sure forward knee does not cross past the line of the toes.

Challenge: Add a bicep curl as you step out into a lunge, add a shoulder press as you step back to starting position.

Seated Leg Curl Machine - Target hamstrings

Starting Position

Follow machine instructions for set up and select desired weight. Sit so that foot pad is behind the ankles, thighs are flush with the seat (but backs of knees are off of the seat), and thigh pad (if present) is just below the knees. Keep knees above ankles, back straight (and flush against pad behind you), abs engaged, and hands lightly gripping handles at your sides.

Action

EXHALE: Slowly bend at the knees to "curl" your heels down towards your buttocks.

INHALE: Slowly straighten knees to return to the start position to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

This can be a dangerous exercise for the knee joint. Practice extreme caution when doing this move, using a light weight and correct form.

OPTION: Hamstring Flexion with Fit Ball

Starting Position

Begin this exercise by lying flat on your back with a fit ball under your heels. Place your arms straight out to your side for support. Lift your hips so that you create a straight line with your body.

Action

Do not use your arms at any point.

EXHALE: Roll the ball in towards your body using your heels.

INHALE: Slowly return to start to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

When rolling the ball in towards your body your hips should stay in the same position - this will force you to use your hamstrings. Concentrate on pressing the ball into the floor with your heels. Challenge: Alternate legs.

Heel Raises on Machine

Starting Position

Follow machine instructions for set up and select desired weight. Position your body so that feet are hip-width apart, toes pointing forward, knees are straight but not locked, back is straight and supported by the pad, and abs are engaged. Place your feet at the bottom of the foot stand, heels off.

Action

EXHALE: Slowly raise your heels up, shifting your weight into the balls of the feet.

INHALE: Slowly lower your heels back down to complete one rep.

Special Instructions

Make sure your knees do not lock. Work through your own range of motion.

Biceps

Standing Barbell Curls

Starting Position

Stand with feet slightly apart, knees slightly bent, abs tight. Grasp barbell with an underhand grip. Lock elbows into the side of your torso and rest weight in your hand at upper thigh level.

Action

INHALE: Curl barbell to your shoulder.

EXHALE: Lower barbell to starting position.

Special Instructions

Keeping abs tight will help protect your lower back. If your body leans backward as your curl up the weight, then the weight is too heavy. Keep elbows pressed into your sides for support and to isolate the biceps.

Seated Dumbbell Curls

Starting Position

Sit on a bench or fit ball, abs tight. Grasp a dumbbell in each hand with an underhand grip. Lock elbows into the side of your torso and rest weights in your hand, on the front of the thigh.

Action

INHALE: Curl one dumbbell to your shoulder.

EXHALE: Lower dumbbell to starting position, then curl the dumbbell in your opposite hand.

One curl on each side equals one rep.

Special Instructions

Keeping abs tight will help protect your lower back. If your body leans backward as your curl up the weight, then the weight is too heavy. Keep elbows pressed into your sides for support and to isolate the biceps. This exercise can also be done standing with feet hip width apart.

Abdominals - Use Variety!

Modified Plank

Starting Position

Begin this exercise by lying on your stomach with your forearms on the floor pointing straight forward, your feet together and your spine in a neutral position. Your feet should be touching or no more than an inch apart.

Action

Lift your body up on your forearms and toes, keeping your body as straight as possible. Maintain this position for as long as possible and challenge yourself to longer periods in the plank position. Try to hold the position for 60 seconds in the beginning, working your way up in 30 second jumps until you can hold the position for 3 minutes or longer. Option: Full Plank - straighten arms as if in the upper push up position.

Special Instructions

Don't let your hips/knees drop, your butt raise, or shift weight to one forearm.

Modified Side Plank**Starting Position**

Lie on left side, legs together, feet stacked. Wrap right arm around waist. Keep head and neck aligned with spine.

Action

Prop upper body on bent left forearm (be sure elbow is directly below shoulder). Press hips toward ceiling, using abs to stabilize torso. Hold for 30 seconds and work up to 1-3 minutes. Option: full Side Plank - extend lower arm so wrist is right under shoulder. Challenge: lift upper arm to ceiling. Super Challenge: lift upper leg (think starfish shape)

Special Instructions

Be sure not to hold breath. Exercise will be easier if feet are staggered instead of stacked.

Reverse Crunch**Starting Position**

Lie on the floor or a mat on your back, with knees bent and hands behind head. Lift legs and bend knees to 90 degrees. Keep a space between your chin and chest (looking diagonal towards the ceiling).

Action

EXHALE: Pull knees in toward chest and hold for 2 seconds.

INHALE: Slowly lower legs back to starting position.

Special Instructions

Don't use your momentum to swing your legs up. Try to keep the motion controlled by your abs.

Rest Days - Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

OPTION: Extend your workout week to four days by following a schedule like this workout, done on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Day 1. Chest, Shoulders and Abs

Day 2. Back

Day 3. Rest

Day 4. Legs and Abs

Day 5. Arms

Day 6. Rest

Day 7. Rest

Don't forget to include a variety of cardio exercises - even on your rest days from weight training.