

# Busting Myths for Strength Training in Older Adults



Age-related mobility limitations are a fact of life for many older adults. Ageing, even in the absence of disease, is associated with a variety of changes that can contribute to decreases in muscle mass, strength, and function. Muscle mass increases from birth and peaks at age 30/35. It then quickly decreases after age 65 for women and 70 for men.

Strength training can combat this loss of muscle strength, muscle mass and bone density associated with ageing.

Strength training is not just a passing exercise trend. It dates back thousands of years as far as the Greeks where a famous wrestler Milo of Croton carried a calf on his back every day to get stronger. The good news is you don't have to start Olympic lifting, run a marathon or even lift a calf to experience the health benefits of strength training!

But how do we go about this? Let's clear up a few common myths about strength training for older adults!



## “I’m too old to start strength training now” – MYTH!

Strength training is no longer a young person’s game. It is now recommended that over 65’s incorporate strength training at least two times a week in order to maintain or increase muscle mass.

## I have a bad [insert joint/body part here] so cannot strength train – MYTH!

A properly prescribed strength programme improves overall joint health, flexibility and function. Strength training is highly recommended as a treatment to reduce joint pain from osteoarthritis, and is often recommended before joint replacement surgery.

## “Weight training is dangerous” – MYTH!

Over 20 years of scientific evidence has proved the safety of strength training in older adults. Physiotherapists are skilled and knowledgeable in the area of strength training across the lifespan and can tailor a programme to meet your specific needs safely and effectively. Many strength exercises actually mimic things we do in our day-to-day routine, such as getting in and out of a chair, carrying shopping bags, and picking things up off the floor.



## 5 tips for Strength training in older adults

- Start by trying to introduce strength training two times a week (ideally not consecutive days).
- Start with bodyweight exercises first, before you start lifting weights or using resistance bands. It is important that you can tolerate your own body weight first.
- Squats, Lunges, Push-ups (against the wall, on your knees) and Step-ups are some exercises that mimic day-to-day activities and are a good starting point. You should be able to easily do these bodyweight exercises before progressing to heavier weights.
- Make sure to add in some balance and flexibility exercise to help you with your strength training.
- See the “Let’s Get Moving Again” booklet on the ISCP website ([www.iscp.ie](http://www.iscp.ie)) for a gentle introduction to strength, balance and flexibility training.

