

The Total Gym in the Wolf Laurel Fitness Center offers a wide variety of exercises to build muscle strength and endurance. Demonstrated below are a few of the basic strength training exercise that can be done in the club's fitness center.

In addition to these exercises, everyone should also strive to include some form of aerobic exercise into their routine. Aerobic activity helps older adults burn off calories, lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, maintain joint movement, improve heart health, and increase energy levels overall. Building endurance may take some time, depending on your health and activity level. Try starting with 5-minute cardio sessions a few days a week to raise your heart rate. From there, work toward eventually completing 30 minutes of aerobic activity on most days. Moderate endurance exercise includes walking briskly or riding the exercise bikes. More intense aerobic activities include hiking and jogging.

The process of building muscle takes time, but the benefits are enormous for your health. Strength training requires good form to reap full benefit. Start with some basic, low-impact exercises. The Total Gym in the fitness center offers many different exercises that will build muscle strength and endurance. Below are few of the basic strength training exercises to try.

Pull downs

The pulldown or 'lat' pulldown is an exercise mainly for the back although the shoulders and arms get some workout as well. This exercise can be done by pulling the bar down in front of you or behind your head as demonstrated in the photo.



Sit on the seat and adjust the thigh pads so that the quads above the knees sit comfortably under the support. This is to prevent the knees rising up as you exert effort to pull the bar down.

Grasp the cable bar with a wide overhand grip, knuckles up and sit on the seat with thighs under the support. Alternative grips, narrow and underhand, are possible but use the wide grip when starting out.

You should just be able to reach the bar when you stretch up. If you can't, adjust the seat or bar hanger cable or chain.

A slight stretch upward to grab the bar is not harmful but you don't want the bar so high that you have to drag it down under pressure so that you can sit down.

Keeping the back straight, pull the bar down to about chin level or to the back of your neck.

Try not to force the bar any lower than where the shoulders are naturally collapsed and the forearms are more or less upright. You should not push the arms forward out of the vertical plane in order to drag the bar lower.

Slowly return the bar to full height and repeat the exercise.

When your set is finished, don't suddenly release the bar and clash the weights. Stand up in order to settle the weights without clashing if necessary.

Flys

Sit on the machine with your back flat on the pad.

Take hold of the handles.

Push the handles together slowly as you squeeze your chest in the middle.

Return back to the starting position slowly as you inhale until your chest muscles are fully stretched.



Leg Extension- Choose your weight and sit on the machine with your legs under the pad (feet pointed forward). This will be your starting position. Use one leg at a time so as not to favor one leg over the other. Using your quadriceps, extend your leg to the maximum as you exhale. Ensure that the rest of the body remains stationary on the seat. Pause a second on the contracted position. Slowly lower the weight back to the original position as you inhale.



Leg Press- Sit on the machine with your back and head against the padded support. As with the leg extension, use only one leg at a time for this exercise.

Place feet on the foot plate about hip-width apart. The leg should form an angle of about 90 degrees at the knee.

Push the platform away with heels and forefoot by extending the knees and hips and pushing the back into the seat pad.

Don't lock out the knees in an explosive fashion but try to go through a full range of motion.



Seated Bench press

Sit at the machine, adjust the seat so the handles are level with your shoulders as you are sitting upright, and choose an appropriate amount of weight.

To begin the lift, exhale and push the handles outward and upward until your arms are fully extended.

Inhale and slowly lower the weight back to the starting position.

Be sure to maintain good posture even though you are seated and keep your back straight.

Complete the exercise in a slow and controlled manner. Use a very light amount of weight until you are comfortable with the lift.



Curls

Sit down on the Preacher Curl Machine and select the weight.

Place the back of your upper arms (your triceps) on the pad provided and grab the handles using an underhand grip (palms facing up). **Tip:** Make sure that when you place the arms on the pad you keep the elbows in. This will be your starting position.

Now lift the handles as you exhale and you contract the biceps. At the top of the position make sure that you hold the contraction for a second. **Tip:** Only the forearms should move. The upper arms should remain stationary and on the pad at all times.

Lower the handles slowly back to the starting position as you inhale.



Start these exercises with low weights at first. You should be able to do 10-12 repetitions without struggling. As it gets easier, gradually increase the weight.

Exercise benefits much more than just the body. You can also improve your mental and emotional health by maintaining an active life. Having fun while you are being

active increases the chance of participating in that activity in the future. Join a walking group so you can exercise and socialize at the same time or try listening to music while you exercise or work outside. Call a friend and participate in a class together, or join some organized activity. Stay active, stay involved, and you'll stay healthy.