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Building Muscle After Menopause: What the Research Shows

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Muscle loss speeds up around menopause — faster in women than in men of the same age. A 2021 randomized study followed 31 women who had never trained regularly through twelve weeks of supervised strength training, three times a week. Half used an estrogen patch; half used a placebo patch. Everyone trained. Everyone gained muscle and strength. The women using estrogen gained roughly twice as much muscle from the same program.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Thigh muscle grew 7.9% with estrogen therapy and 3.9% without it
- ✓ Whole-body lean mass rose 5.5% with estrogen and 2.9% without
- ✓ Leg strength improved 34–59% in **both** groups
- ✓ Grip and finger strength improved only in the estrogen group
- ✓ Every participant was untrained when the study began

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

If your workouts feel less productive than they used to, there may be a physiological reason — and it isn't a reason to stop. Strength training worked for every group in this study. If you're already using hormone therapy for symptoms, structured resistance training may give you more back than training alone. If you're not, training still works. Progress here showed up on scans, not on the bathroom scale, so judge it by how you feel and function.

TALK TO YOUR PROVIDER IF...

- ✓ You've noticed strength, balance or stamina declining
- ✓ You want to start strength training and aren't sure where to begin
- ✓ You're already on hormone therapy and want to make the most of it
- ✓ You have joint problems or other conditions that affect exercise

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- ☐ Is resistance training safe for me given my health history?
- ☐ How much protein should I be getting if I start training?
- ☐ Would hormone therapy be appropriate for me for any reason?
- ☐ How should I track progress if the scale won't show it?

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This handout is provided for general education and is not medical advice. It summarizes findings from published research and does not account for your individual medical history, medications or circumstances. Do not start, stop or change any treatment based on this material. Always consult your own healthcare provider about decisions regarding your care.

RESEARCH SOURCE CITATION

TITLE	Transdermal Estrogen Therapy Improves Gains in Skeletal Muscle Mass After 12 Weeks of Resistance Training in Early Postmenopausal Women
AUTHORS	Dam TV, Dalgaard LB, Ringgaard S, Johansen FT, Bisgaard Bengtsen M, Mose M, Lauritsen KM, Ørtenblad N, Gravholt CH, Hansen M
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