Exercising in your 40s-50s

Midlife strength and metabolic health

Why exercise matters in your 40s and 50s

As we age into our midlife, age-related changes to your body may include:

- Reduced muscle mass
- Increased adipose tissue (fat around your abdomen)
- Reduced aerobic capacity
- Increased chronic disease risk

Exercise during this period is critical for maintaining your metabolic health and your ability to perform daily tasks, self-care, household chores and cognitive and social activities independently.

Recommended weekly activity

Adults should continue to aim for:

- 150–300 minutes moderate aerobic activity, or
- 75–150 minutes vigorous aerobic activity, plus
- Strength training at least two days per week
  - (Golaszewski et al., 2021; Canada.ca, 2026)
- Additionally – balance training is a great addition to reduce your falls risk!

What to prioritise

Strength training

Preserves muscle mass and metabolic health.

Cardiovascular fitness

Reduces cardiovascular and metabolic disease risk, combatting age-related changes.

Mobility and joint health

Helps prevent musculoskeletal pain and injury.

Regular exercise helps mitigate the age-related increase in BMI and loss of muscle and bone mass observed in midlife (MDPI Nutrients, 2025).

Written by Accredited Exercise Physiologist Kirra Womersley
in collaboration with Exercise Right

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Sex differences in midlife exercise

In your 40s–50s, age-related changes between men and women become more noticeable due to differences in hormones. For men, testosterone slowly decreases (about 1% each year), which can lead to a gradual reduction in muscle mass, strength, and overall fitness.

For women, these years often mark the start of menopause. During this time, there is a significant drop in oestrogen, which can accelerate age-related changes. This may lead to faster loss of muscle and bone mass, as well as an increase in fat around the abdomen. Many women also experience symptoms such as fatigue, poor sleep quality, and hot flushes, which can make exercise and recovery feel more challenging.

Despite this, women often respond really well to exercise, making physical activity a powerful tool to help protect against many of these changes.

Exercise prescription for women:

Larger focus on resistance training (3-4 sessions per week), progressive loading and safe impact-based exercises to combat accelerated muscle and bone loss.

Exercise prescription for men:

Focus on maintaining muscle mass, strength and cardiovascular fitness by continuing to follow Australian general guidelines

Recommended exercise types

- Resistance training
- Brisk walking, cycling or swimming
- Functional strength training
- Mobility and flexibility training

Exercise physiologist expert insight

Midlife strength and fitness is your long-term insurance policy. Staying strong now is one of the most effective ways to protect against frailty, injury and chronic disease later in life!

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