



Flex-it February

Health Yourself Challenge

February 3- March 2

Reasons why I want a strong heart.

February is Heart Health Month- strengthen yours with this month's power-building activities.

Building strength is good for your heart!

- Resistance training is linked to a 17% lower risk of heart disease compared to those who don't do it.
- Resistance training improves lipids, glucose, and blood pressure
- Resistance training also improves other heart disease risk factors, such as sleep, mood, quality of life and the way blood vessels function.
- Building muscle strength also strengthens our mental health by helping us feel better in our bodies- yay for that!

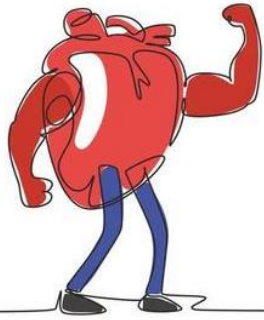
Join us this February and see how you feel after 28 days.

Use the weekly challenge logs to aim for the following and jot down what you did:

- 3 non-consecutive days of 'Strength Building'- for at least 15 minutes. Use our guides (p.3) or do your own thing!
- 3 active rest days: one day with muscle release and massage, one day engaging in breathing techniques, and one day with power-poses and posture awareness. See page 4 for more information on these exercises.

Return your completed log by March 10 and you'll qualify for points and prizes.

Completing at least 20 of the challenge activities earns you 15 Health Yourself points.



Flex-it February

Name: _____

Health Yourself Challenge

of completed strength and active rest days: _____

Watch for an upload link to return your completed log by 3/10.

Complete at least 20 days of the challenge activities to earn 15 Health Yourself points.

	Strength Building Day 1: 15 minutes	Strength Building Day 2: 15 minutes	Strength Building Day 3: 15 minutes	Rest Day 1: Power poses & Posture awareness	Rest Day 2: Muscle release & massage 10 minutes	Rest Day 3: Breath training 10 minutes
Week 1 2/3- 2/9						
Week 2 2/10- 2/16						
Week 3 2/17- 2/23						
Week 4 2/24- 3/2						

Strength building suggestions to get a little stronger every day. Increase reps or difficulty as they become easy.

- ❖ Take your time, breathe, and ensure you are using proper form. Swap out any exercises that aggravate existing injuries.
- ❖ Pay attention to both concentric and eccentric loading for each movement: ie: the lift and slow control of releasing it.
- ❖ If you have access to equipment, swap in any of the following: [chest press](#), [bent over row](#), [bicep curls](#), [pull-ups/ dead hangs](#).

Beginner routine: repeat 2-4 rounds

- [Bodyweight squats](#) or chair squats- 15 reps
- [Wall Push-ups](#) or [Knee Push-ups](#)- 10 reps
- [Glute Bridges](#)- 15 reps
- [Calf raises](#) or [side-lying hip abduction](#); 15 reps per leg
- [Superman hold](#), [Bird Dog](#), or [Good Mornings](#)- hold for 2 seconds 15 reps
- [Plank- knees, full or side](#)- hold for 20-30 seconds

Progression each week:

- Week 1: focus on form, do 2-3 rounds
- Week 2: Increase reps slightly- by 2-3 per set
- Week 3: Try harder versions or add weight (heavy household objects can work instead of dumbbells) or resistance bands
- Week 4: Add one more round, for 4 total, and go slower

Intermediate routine: repeat 3-4 rounds

- [Squats, single- leg squats or jump squats](#)- 15 reps
- [Push-ups with regular or elevated feet](#)- 12 reps
- [Single leg Bridge or Marching Bridge](#)- 10 reps per leg
- [Wall sits](#)- until you can't hold it anymore OR 10 [Step ups](#)- using a sturdy bench or chair reps per leg
- [Superman lifts](#) or [dead bug](#)- hold for 5 seconds 15 reps
- [Plank- forearm, side, or lifted leg variation](#)- hold for 30-45 seconds

Progression each week:

- Week 1: focus on form, do 2-3 rounds
- Week 2: Increase reps slightly- by 2-3 per set
- Week 3: Increase intensity by going slower or add weight (heavy household objects can work instead of dumbbells) or resistance bands
- Week 4: Add one more round, for 4 total, go slower, and increase plank hold to 1 minute



Rest Day Exercises

Active Rest Day 1: Power Poses and Posture Awareness

One day each week pay attention to how you hold your body. Check in on your posture several times in the day- set a timer and check:

- Is your chest open with your shoulders blades low and pinching toward each other?
- When sitting and laying, are there any areas out of alignment?
- When standing, is your pelvis neutral- stacked over your heels and under your ribs?
- At standing, are your knees slightly bent with thighs externally rotated (imagine the backs of your thighs rotating in toward each other)?

Shake up your movement patterns throughout the day with some power poses- like the starfish, Wonder Woman, victory pose, or your own. Positions that convey confidence, strength, and authority help you feel mentally and emotionally stronger, according to research. This is a fun way to build confidence in your body and strength. Try it and see how it effects your month!



Active Rest Day 2: Muscle release and massage

Muscles that are chronically contracted cannot create foundational strength and may need help getting unstuck. Luckily we can help our muscles and the fascia around them release. Use one of your 'rest days' to do 10 minutes of any combination of the following:

- Foam rolling or self-massage: No foam roller? Grab a [tennis ball](#) and use your body weight on it to apply pressure.
- [Progressive muscle relaxation](#)- tense (5 seconds) and actively relax (10 seconds) one muscle group at a time.
- Stretching or yoga

Active Rest Day 3: Breath Training

Our bodies need full, spacious breaths for stability and strength. Stress, posture, and other constraints can hinder these efforts. At least one day a week take 10 minutes to focus on your breath with some of the following exercises:

- Diaphragmatic ("Belly") breathing: sit or lay with one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest and take slow deep breaths in, so that your stomach moves against your hand, but your chest hand remains still. Exhale slowly, contracting your abs together.
- Train your body to better utilize oxygen by building your CO₂ tolerance with breath hold exercises like swimming, or breathhold walking- where you walk slowly on level ground, exhale all the breath out and walk, counting each step until you feel a strong air hunger. Take a few calm breaths through the nose and repeat after another minute of normal breathing.
- Deep breathing during [thoracic spine mobilizations](#)- seated pec stretch, cat cow, child's pose, and back rotation stretch.