



# How Much Weight Should I Lift?

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A member of my senior Forever Fit class mentioned that her Doctor said strength training with weights is very good for you. Then she asked what I thought. My answer is, "I agree 100%!"

There are many benefits to strength training with weights. Strength training helps maintain & improve muscle strength, build muscle, increase bone density, increase cardio vascular endurance & stamina, flexibility and mobility. In addition to these fitness benefits, we see many advantages in everyday life such as being independent, lifting and carrying groceries and laundry, safely and easily getting up from a chair, getting up off the floor, walking, climbing up and down stairs safely and easily, and playing with and staying active with your grandchildren. These are all examples of what we maintain through regular exercise.



## How much weight should you lift?

### Should you be lifting light or heavy weights as an active older adult?

The answers can get a little confusing. Let's try to clear things up. This can depend on many factors, including:

- Do you have any injuries or restrictions in range of motion?
- Has your physician told you that you should be only lifting certain amounts of weight?
- Has your physician given you any restrictions on movements or exercises?
- Do you have a heart condition, arthritis, osteoporosis or any other medical concerns?

We see many people lifting a minimum weight of 1 to 2 lbs. in classes. This is fine. However, whether your goal is to progress or even simply maintain your good health and strength, you should advance and move on to lifting heavier weights. I am not saying, "If you are comfortable lifting 1 to 2 lbs. that you must add weight." But it is something to think about.

Here are some things to consider:

- Sometimes it depends on the exercise.
- Is the weight over head?
- Do you feel pain when lifting a certain amount of weight in specific exercises and range of motion?
- Are your arms extended or bent at the elbows?
- Are the weights far away from your body or close?

All of these and more can be factors. A good place to start is by meeting for a Fitness Assessment with a personal fitness trainer. They can help you determine all the answers to these questions and many others you might have. They can also set up a fitness program and advise you on what's best to fit your goals and needs.

### **How do you determine on your own and / or in a class what weights to lift for which exercises?**

- I usually tell people pick a weight you are comfortable lifting, yet that can challenge you without too much difficulty with in 8 to 10 repetitions to start.
- You may want to have 2 different weight ranges. A set of light weights for when your arms are fully extended such as when doing Forward Shoulder Raises, Shoulder Flies and Over Head Presses.
- Then a heavier weight for exercises that are close to your body like Bicep Curls and some leg exercises.
- You may also want to use a lighter weight when rehabbing an injury or if you are in pain during an exercise or range of motion.

***Exercise may be difficult and challenging, but should not cause pain, especially in the joints, neck or back.***

### **How do you know when and if you should advance and start lifting a heavier weight? Good question!**

Once you have been lifting a specific weight for a prolonged amount of time, for instance about a month or so, the weight should feel easier to lift. You should feel stronger. It's no longer as challenging. At this point try lifting another pound or 2 heavier. This should feel a little more difficult, yet manageable. If you are not comfortable with the new weight, then go back to using the lighter weight and try again in a few weeks or so.

You should be advancing in strength and lifting a heavier weight somewhat regularly. It should take roughly about 1-1/2 to 2 months to adjust and get used to lifting a specific weight. Then try lifting a little heavier and see how you feel.

If you're not sure or have any questions, feel free to ask one of our Forever Fit class instructors. We'll be happy to help you.



**John Hoadley** has been working with Forever Fit and teaching fitness with seniors since 2014. He has been coaching clients of all ages & abilities at fitness centers through-out Connecticut since 2010 with both group classes and individual training. John has achieved the following education: Three Rivers Community College, Norwich, CT, Human Anatomy, Biology and Physiology; National Exercise & Sports Trainers Association: Elite Training Specialist, Bio- Mechanics Specialist, Core Conditioning Specialist, Sport Yoga Instructor, Kettlebell Coach, Fitness Nutrition Coach; American Senior Fitness Association: American Senior Fitness Instructor; Precision Nutrition: Level 1 Nutrition Coach; Functional Movement Systems: FMS Level 1 Coach; National Safety Council First Aid & CPR.

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