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# CENTRAL PA HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT NEWSLETTER FOR HEALTHY OUTCOMES

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*a monthly newsletter provided by the Central PA Health Care Quality Unit*

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## The Appeal of the Banana

*From Berkeley Wellness Alert, October 28, 2011*

Bananas are appealing. Though not the most nutritious of all fruits, they supply good amounts of potassium, fiber and vitamin C, along with some magnesium, B vitamins and a bunch of other nutrients. And they have only 90 to 135 calories, depending on the banana's size. One very large banana (9-inch) counts as two fruit servings.

Bananas grow on plants (not trees) in tropical regions around the world and are technically giant berries. We mostly eat Cavendish bananas, though there are hundreds of other kinds, including wild bananas no bigger than a finger. Because cultivated bananas have no seeds, they can't reproduce on their own and are thus grown by cloning. This means that grocery-store bananas are all identical in genes—and taste.

As bananas ripen and their starch turns to sugar, the flesh softens and becomes sweeter. Size makes no difference in flavor or texture. Bananas ripen faster in a paper or plastic bag. It's okay to refrigerate them once they are ripe; the peel will turn a harmless black, though the pulp may get mushier. (Green bananas will never ripen properly when refrigerated, however.) You can freeze peeled ripe bananas in plastic wrap for later use, or use over-ripe bananas in baking and in smoothies. Plantains, large greenish bananas, are for cooking, not eating raw; they have a higher starch content (more like a potato) than "sweet" bananas.

**Bananas as medicine?** Like other potassium-rich foods, bananas are allowed to carry the health claim that they may reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke. And they are still commonly recommended for diarrhea; substances in bananas, especially less ripe ones, may, paradoxically, have both a slight binding and a slight anti-constipating effect. But don't count on bananas to treat depression, PMS, anemia, ulcers or stress, help you quit smoking, or have any other extraordinary health benefits, as websites claim.

**Beware banana chips.** Nutritionally, fried banana chips (often made from plantains) are closer to potato chips than to bananas. One ounce has about 150 calories and 10 grams of fat; sugar is frequently added. Look for banana chips that, instead, are dehydrated or baked.

### What's in a (medium-size) banana?

Potassium, 420 milligrams (12 percent of the Daily Value of 3,500 milligrams)

Vitamin C, 10 milligrams (17 percent of the Daily Value of 60 milligrams)

Magnesium, 32 milligrams (8 percent of the Daily Value of 400 milligrams)

Fiber, 3 grams (12 percent of the Daily Value of 25 grams)

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*The information offered in this newsletter is to increase your awareness of health related conditions and situations and not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. If you believe you or someone you support has a condition, please seek the advice of a physician.*

# 8 simple steps to a healthier, stronger you

From: *Harvard Health Beat*, January 17, 2012

When you hear the term “strength training,” perhaps you envision a bodybuilder with bulging biceps and rippling abdominal muscles. However, strength and power training can benefit people of all ages and athletic abilities — whether you are 40 or 85, well toned or unable to rise from a wheelchair without assistance. And while strength training can leave your body looking leaner and fitter, it need not make you look muscle-bound.

Studies attest that strength training, as well as aerobic exercise, can help you manage and sometimes prevent conditions as varied as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and osteoporosis. But chief among its health benefits is its ability to protect vitality and make everyday tasks more manageable. Over the years, muscle tissue, bone density, and strength dwindle. So, too, does muscle power.

These changes can make once-simple tasks like climbing a flight of stairs or carrying a bag of groceries difficult. By focusing on strengthening muscles you actually use to walk up stairs, rise from a chair, or lift laundry or groceries, the following exercises can help you target the specific muscles and moves needed for the tasks of daily life (or a sport) rather than just building up muscles in general.

## The exercises

Before beginning the workout, complete a five- to 10-minute warm-up, such as walking briskly. As you perform each of these exercises, breathe out when you are lifting or pushing and breathe in as you release the muscle. Rest for one to two minutes between sets, and aim to complete two to three sets of each exercise.



### 1. Standing calf raise

*Exercises the calf muscles*

Stand with your feet flat on the floor. Hold on to the back of your chair for balance. Raise yourself up on tiptoe, as high as possible. Hold briefly, then lower yourself. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions. Rest and repeat the set.

### 2. Chair stand

*Exercises the muscles of the abdomen, hips, front thighs, and buttocks*

Place a small pillow at the back of your chair and position the chair so that the back of it is resting against a wall. Sit at the front of the chair, knees bent, feet flat on the floor and slightly apart. Lean back on the pillow in a half-reclining position with your arms crossed and your hands on your shoulders. Keeping your back and shoulders straight, raise your upper body forward until you are sitting upright. Stand up slowly, using your hands as little as possible. Slowly sit back down. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions. Rest and repeat the set.



### 3. Stair climbing

*Exercises the muscles of the front thighs and buttocks*

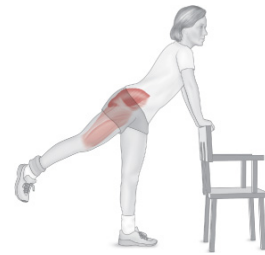
Holding on to the handrail for balance if necessary, walk up and down a flight of at least 10 stairs at a pace that feels comfortable. Pause at the top only if you need to do so. Rest when you reach the bottom. Repeat four times.



#### 4. Hip extension

*Exercises the muscles of the buttocks and back thighs*

While wearing ankle weights, stand 12 inches behind a sturdy chair. Holding on to the back of the chair for balance, bend your trunk forward 45 degrees. Slowly raise your right leg straight out behind you. Lift it as high as possible without bending your knee. Pause. Slowly lower the leg. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions. Repeat with your left leg. Rest and repeat the sets.



#### 5. Seated bridge

*Exercises the muscles of the back thighs, back, and buttocks*

Sit slightly forward in a chair with your hands on the armrests. Your feet should be flat on the floor and slightly apart, and your upper body should be upright (don't lean forward). Using your arms for balance only, slowly raise your buttocks off the chair until you are nearly standing, with your knees bent. Pause. Slowly sit back down. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions. Rest and repeat the set.



#### 6. Biceps curl

*Exercises the front upper arm muscles*

Sit in a chair. Hold weights down at your sides with your palms inward. Slowly bend one elbow, lifting the weight toward your upper chest. As you lift, keep your elbow close to your side and rotate your palm so it faces your shoulder. Pause. Slowly lower your arm, rotating it back again so you finish with your palm facing your thighs. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions. Repeat with your other arm. Rest and repeat the sets.



#### 7. Triceps dip

*Exercises the muscles of the back upper arms, chest, and shoulders*

Put a chair with armrests up against a wall. Sit in the chair and put your feet together flat on the floor. Lean forward a bit while keeping your shoulders and back straight. Bend your elbows and place your hands on the armrests of the chair, so they are in line with your torso. Pressing downward on your hands, try to lift yourself up a few inches by straightening out your arms. Raise your upper body and thighs, but keep your feet in contact with the floor. Pause. Slowly release until you're sitting back down again. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions. Rest and repeat the set.



#### 8. Curl-up\*

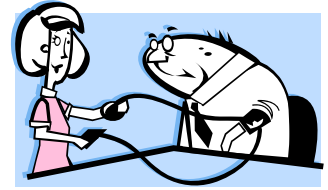
*Exercises the central abdominal muscles*



Lie on your back on a mat. Put your hands beneath the small of your back and bend both knees to help stabilize your spine. Slowly raise your head and shoulders just a few inches off the floor. Pause. Slowly lower your head and shoulders. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions. Rest and repeat the set.

\*If you have osteoporosis, talk to your doctor before trying this exercise. He or she may recommend that you avoid it.

# STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



From Health Ink & Vitality Communications – MerckSource.com

Talk to your doctor if you have a blood pressure greater than 120/80 mm Hg. Weight loss, diet and lifestyle changes may be enough to control mildly elevated blood pressure. Drug therapy is also available. Talk to your doctor to see if such therapy may be appropriate for you.

The following lifestyle choices can help reduce your blood pressure:

**Don't smoke.** Inhaling cigarette smoke can stimulate your heart, making it beat faster. It also may narrow your blood vessels, causing your blood pressure to rise dramatically.

**Maintain a healthful weight.** Being overweight increases your risk for developing high blood pressure: Blood pressure rises as body weight increases, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Being overweight also is a risk factor for heart disease. It also increases your chance for developing high blood cholesterol and diabetes, two more risk factors for heart disease. To lose weight safely, try to eat fewer foods high in fat and calories and increase your physical activity.

**Exercise regularly.** Regular aerobic exercise can tone your heart, blood vessels and muscles and keep your blood pressure low. Try for at least 30 minutes of moderate-level activity on most, and preferably all, days of the week. Moderate-level activities include walking briskly; general housecleaning; mowing the lawn with power mower; gardening; dancing; and cycling at a moderate speed. Consult your doctor before beginning an exercise regimen if you have high blood pressure.

**Learn to cope with stress.** Stress can make blood pressure go up for a while, and it has been thought to contribute to high blood pressure. The long-term effects of stress are as unclear, however, and stress management techniques do not seem to prevent high blood pressure. Stress management techniques may help you control overeating, and in turn your weight. Ideas for reducing stress include meditation, listening to stress-management tapes or doing relaxation exercises.

**Limit Alcohol Consumption.** Experts recommend no more than two drinks a day for a man and one drink a day for a woman.

**Limit your salt intake.** A diet too high in sodium can cause the body to retain water, which increases the volume of blood in circulation. This increases the pressure in the arteries. Most people need no more than 2,400 mg of sodium a day, including the sodium found in processed foods, as well as what you add when cooking or eating. That's about a teaspoon of table salt. If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may tell you to cut your intake even more.

One way to reduce your sodium intake: Avoid high-salt foods, such as soy sauce, potato chips, corn chips, chicken broth, pickles, canned soups, bacon, ham, and many convenience and frozen foods. Other ideas: Purchase no- or low-salt products whenever possible. Avoid adding salt at the table. Also, increase your intake of potassium, which can help flush sodium from the body. Good sources of potassium include cantaloupe, cooked tomatoes, bananas, baked potatoes, strawberries and summer squash.