

Service Women Strength Training: Myths & Truths



Strength training is defined as a **type of exercise that causes your muscles to resist an external force.** The force can be applied by your **body weight, dumbbells, resistance bands, barbells, and more.**

Strength training is an important part of an **overall fitness program** for service members which improves physical readiness. There are **many myths that surround strength training** that impact how service women perceive fitness. The following information will **debunk common misconceptions.**

MYTH: "Strength training is for men."

TRUTH: It may be even more important for women to strengthen their bones and muscles than it is for men! Three major reasons include:

1. Women are at a higher risk for osteoporosis, which is a gradual weakening of our bones as we age. Strength training has been shown to increase [bone density](#), especially in menopausal women. Find more tips about bone health [here](#).
2. Strength training has a higher impact on the female metabolism, having a greater impact on [body composition](#) than endurance training alone.
3. Female hormones are impacted by strength training which has been shown to have positive impacts on those with polycystic ovary syndrome ([PCOS](#)).

MYTH: "I can't start strength training because I don't want to look bulky."

TRUTH: Strength training in women has been shown to have a positive impact on female [body image](#). Strength training can improve body satisfaction and social anxiety surrounding one's physique.

MYTH: "I will get injured if I strength train."

TRUTH: Multiple studies have shown strength training to be an [injury prevention tool](#), especially in women who play [recreational sports](#).

- Supervised, low-to-moderate intensity strength training can have [beneficial impacts for pregnant service women](#). Physical inactivity while pregnant can increase fetal and maternal risks.
- Service members can also [reduce signs and symptoms of chronic conditions](#) like arthritis, back pain, obesity, heart disease, and diabetes by strength training.

MYTH: "I have occasional urinary incontinence when lifting, especially in squats or deadlifts. But that is just part of being a woman."

TRUTH: No amount of urinary incontinent or leaking is "normal." It is common, but it is a [dysfunction](#). Pelvic floor muscles need training just like any other muscles. Strengthening your pelvic floor can help decrease incontinence. A pelvic floor physical therapist can give you specific guidance.

- Speak to your Primary Care Provider about the necessity of a referral for [pelvic floor physical therapy](#).

To learn more about strength training, check out the [Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System \(NOFFS\) project](#).

Developed by: **NAVY MEDICINE FEMALE FORCE READINESS CLINICAL COMMUNITY**

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