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The right training plan looks different for everyone, depending on your current fitness level and your goals. If you're not currently doing any strength training, start with two days per week. As you become proficient in the exercises, you can add a third day into the week, says Matthews. (The training plan below includes the progression from two to three days per week, but if you do not feel comfortable adding a session, you can stick with two until you feel ready.) If you are already doing other strength training, you can start by swapping in one resistance band workout for one of your strength sessions. Make sure that these sessions are on nonconsecutive days, which provides the rest and recovery your body needs. Don't forget the value of rest and recovery. "You need 48 hours of rest between sessions where you eat a healthy diet that includes good sources of protein to repair muscles," says Charlie Goehl, professor in the department of kinesiology at Elmhurst University in Illinois. This is why the resistance band workouts in the plan below are not on consecutive days. For the plan below, Matthews recommends doing a full-body workout for all the resistance band sessions. Choose a combination of exercises that target all the major muscle groups and take up the full 30 minutes of the workout. Matthews suggests doing three to four sets of each exercise, aiming for 20 reps per exercise. If that feels like too much to start with, complete one set including each exercise and gradually add sets over a few weeks as the workout starts to feel easier. No matter how you structure the workout, make sure that you are doing a combination of upper and lower body. Matthews likes a workout that has at least one type of squat (to target the lower body), a push move (like a pushup to target chest and shoulders), and a pull move (like a seated row to target biceps and back). If you're not currently doing any other exercise, Matthews advises brisk walking or another aerobic exercise of your choice on your non-resistance-band workout days to meet the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommendations to get 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity per week. If you are currently doing other aerobic exercise, Matthews recommends either doing strength workouts on off cardio days or, if you choose to do them on the same day, structuring your workout to do resistance before cardio. (This way, muscles will be fresh and not worn out for the band workout.) Ready? Let's go. Week 1 Day 1 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 2 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 3 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 4 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 5 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 6 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 7 Rest (or gentle activity, like an easy walk) Week 2 Day 1 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 2 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 3 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 4 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 5 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 6 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 7 Rest (or gentle activity, like an easy walk) Week 3 Day 1 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 2 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 3 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 4 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 5 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 6 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 7 Rest (or gentle activity, like an easy walk) Week 4 Day 1 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 2 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 3 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 4 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 5 30-minute walk or other cardio Day 6 Full-body resistance band workout, 30 minutes Day 7 Rest (or gentle activity, like an easy walk) Are you up for a 31-day challenge? Join us on the START Today Facebook group for daily tips and motivation, to connect with others following the plan, and to get real-time advice from trainer Stephanie Mansour! You likely found your way here because you've set a resolution to get your fitness routine back on track and make your health a priority this year. While many people tend to jump right into an intense cardio routine this time of year, strength training is actually a smart place to start to see the results you're looking for. If you're looking for a way to tone your muscles and get a more defined look without expensive equipment, resistance bands are for you. Getty Images Strength training is often thought of as a means of improving athletic performance or gaining muscle mass. However, strength training has been largely associated with preventing injury. This means that improving strength is important for everyone, not just athletes or body builders. With stronger muscles, you decrease your chance of injury on a day-to-day basis, which is something we can all benefit from. When I work with clients who are just getting started with strength work, I love to recommend resistance bands. They are cheaper, more portable and more versatile than dumbbells. If you're looking for a way to tone your muscles and get a more defined look without expensive equipment, resistance bands are for you. Plus, they offer a form of strength training that works your stabilizing muscles, which adds an additional core challenge. 31-day resistance band workout plan You can use resistance bands to target every major muscle group. I've devised this 31-day resistance band routine to strengthen the upper body, lower body and core, plus give you a cardio workout, too. On rest days, make sure to stretch — you can even use the resistance band to help! Download a printable calendar here. TODAY Illustration Upper body workout For the upper body exercises you will utilize a resistance band with handles. Bicep curl Hold one handle in each hand. With your feet hip-width apart, step on the center of the band with both feet. Slightly bend your knees and pull your abs in. Keeping your upper arms glued to your sides, pull the band up toward your shoulders into a bicep curl, then release back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Bent over reverse fly Hold one handle in each hand. Step one foot forward and the other foot back behind you into a high lunge. Anchor the band under your front foot. Bend the front knee at almost a 90-degree angle and keep a slight bend in the back knee as well. Hinge at your waist, leaning forward to a 45-degree angle, and let your arms reach down toward the floor. Squeeze your shoulder blades together, pulling the band out to the sides as high as your shoulders. Return to the starting position and repeat 10 times. Overhead press Start in the same position as the last exercise, with one foot forward, standing on top of the band, and the other foot back behind you. Switch your grip, grabbing the handles from underneath so that your palms are facing forward, away from you. Hold the handles at shoulder height. Press the band up over your head, extending both arms fully. Release back down to the starting position and repeat 10 times. Horizontal rear delt flys Grab the tubing of the band with both hands. Hold it in front of your chest with your hands as wide as your shoulders, letting the handles dangle. Make sure there is a little bit of tension on the band from this position; you don't want any slack. Then, keep the shoulders down and engage the upper back as you pull your arms straight out to the sides, wider than your shoulders. Come back to center and repeat 10 times. Seated row Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you and your back straight. Wrap the resistance band around the bottom of your feet, holding one handle in each hand. Keeping good posture, pull the ends of the band toward your chest. Repeat 10 times. Lower body workout For the lower body exercises you will utilize a resistance band loop. Standing side taps Stand with your feet hip-width apart and the resistance band around your ankles. Slightly bend your knees and shift your weight so that you are standing on your right leg; press down through the heel. Then, lift the left leg out to the side so that it is completely straight, tapping the toe on the ground. Bring it back to center. Repeat 10 times and then switch to the right side. Standing glute kickbacks Stand with your feet hip-width apart and the resistance band around your ankles; bend your knees slightly. Shift your weight so that you are standing on your right leg. Step the left leg back behind you and straighten the leg, reaching through the heel. Then bring it back to center. Repeat 10 times and then switch sides. Squat jacks This move works both the glutes and the legs by combining the squat with the jumping jack. Place the resistance band around your thighs just above your knees. In a slight squat position with your feet hip-width apart, jump both feet out toward opposite sides of the room and then back together. Repeat 10 times. Side lying hip abduction Lie on your right side with your right hip and right leg on the ground, and your left leg stacked on top. Wrap the resistance band around both legs, just above your knees. Pull your knees apart by raising your upper leg toward the ceiling. Squeeze your glutes throughout the move, holding your legs apart for a few seconds before returning the left leg to meet the right again. Repeat 10 times before switching sides. Glute bridge Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor in front of you. Wrap the resistance band around both legs just above your knees. Keeping your heels on the ground, lift your hips up toward the ceiling, forming a straight line with your body from your knees to your shoulders. Squeeze your glutes and maintain tension on the band by pressing your knees outward. Return to the starting position and repeat 10 times. Core and cardio workout Core open and close Lie on your back with the resistance band wrapped around the upper thighs. Reach the legs up toward the ceiling and then lower down to a 45-degree angle. From there, open the legs as wide as the shoulders, feeling the outer hips working against the resistance of the band, and then close the legs back together. Repeat this 10 times, making sure to pull the naval in toward the spine and press the low back into the ground. Standing crunch With your feet hip-width apart, fold your resistance band in half and hold it straight out in front of you, keeping your arms straight. Lift your right knee toward your left hand until your knee touches the band. Return to the starting position and repeat on the opposite side. Repeat 10 times on each side. Lying leg raise Lie down on the floor and wrap the resistance band around your ankles. Keep your hands on the floor or under your butt and your legs straight. Lift one leg up while keeping the other on the floor. Alternate legs, kicking up and down. Repeat 10 times on each side. Skating squats Standing on top of your band with your feet hip width apart, hold one handle of the band in each hand. Bend down into a half squat or full squat position. When you stand back up, shift your weight onto your right leg and straighten your left leg out to the side pushing against the resistance of the band. Return to a squat position and repeat on the opposite side. Do as many as possible for one minute. Opposition cardio jacks Instead of performing a jumping jack with your hands moving over your head, perform one with your hands moving in front of you. Fold the band in half, holding one side in each hand. With your feet together, pull the bands apart. When you jump your feet apart, release your hands back together, performing the opposite movement of a traditional jumping jack. Repeat as fast as you can for one minute.

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