



FREE GUIDE FOR WOMEN 40+

The Midlife Strength Starter Guide

5 Simple Ways to Build Strength Through
Perimenopause, Menopause & Beyond

Practical. Sustainable. Strength-first.

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TENACITY FITNESS

1. Why Strength Matters More in Midlife

You do not need to train like an athlete. You do need a plan that gives your muscles a reason to stay strong.

Through the 40s, 50s and beyond, maintaining muscle and physical capacity becomes increasingly important for everyday life. Strength training is one of the most practical tools we have for supporting muscle, function, balance and healthy aging.

The goal is not to make every workout exhausting. The goal is to train consistently enough, and with enough resistance, that your body has a reason to adapt.

The simple rule

Train your major muscle groups at least twice each week, use resistance that feels challenging by the end of each set, and progress gradually over time.

- Strength supports everyday tasks such as getting up from the floor, carrying groceries, climbing stairs and maintaining independence.
- Resistance exercise can be part of a bone-healthy lifestyle alongside adequate nutrition, appropriate medical care and regular weight-bearing activity.
- You do not need long workouts. Two or three focused full-body sessions each week can be an excellent starting point.
- Consistency beats intensity. A routine you can repeat is more useful than an occasional “perfect” workout.

A note on midlife

Energy, sleep, recovery and symptoms can vary. Adjust your training volume when needed, but keep the habit of strength work whenever you reasonably can.

2. The Basic Equipment You Actually Need

You can build a very effective home strength setup without turning your living room into a gym.

Adjustable dumbbells	Best all-around choice. A pair that lets you increase weight over time gives you far more room to progress than one light fixed pair.
Resistance bands	Useful and inexpensive. Loop bands and a longer resistance band add variety for glutes, rows, pull-aparts and travel workouts.
Exercise mat	Helpful for floor work. Choose enough cushioning for comfort without making standing exercises unstable.
Stable chair or bench	Optional but useful. Use it for sit-to-stands, supported rows, step-ups or seated pressing. Stability matters more than fancy features.
Optional extras	Only if they solve a real need. A compact step, weighted vest or kettlebell can be useful later, but none is required to start.

Before you buy more equipment

Ask: "Will this help me perform a movement I cannot already train?" If the answer is no, you probably do not need it yet.

- For most home workouts, dumbbells plus bands cover the majority of what you need.
- Choose equipment in pounds if that makes progression easier for you to track.
- Prioritize stable handles, secure collars or locking systems, clear weight markings and enough load to challenge your legs as well as your upper body.

3. How to Choose the Right Resistance

The weight should be heavy enough to matter, but not so heavy that technique falls apart.

For most strength exercises, a useful starting range is about 8-12 controlled repetitions. The last few reps should feel noticeably harder than the first few.

Use “reps in reserve”

Finish most working sets feeling as though you could have done about 2-3 more good repetitions. If you could easily do 8 more, the resistance is probably too light. If form breaks down before the target reps, it is too heavy.

- New to strength training? Start with 1-2 working sets per exercise and build toward 2-3 sets.
- Move through a comfortable range of motion you can control. More range is not automatically better if it causes pain or loss of position.
- Rest about 60-120 seconds between challenging sets. Bigger lower-body exercises may need more rest than small upper-body movements.
- Progress one variable at a time: first improve technique, then add repetitions, then add a little weight.
- Do not chase soreness. Soreness is not a scorecard for workout quality.

A simple progression ladder

1 Learn the movement	2 Reach the rep target	3 Add a little load	4 Repeat consistently
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4. Five Simple Movement Patterns for Your Whole Body

Think in movement patterns instead of trying to collect dozens of exercises.

1. Squat	Examples: sit-to-stand, goblet squat. Keep your whole foot grounded and use a depth you can control comfortably.
2. Hinge	Examples: Romanian deadlift, hip hinge. Push the hips back while keeping the weight close to the body. Think “long spine, strong hips.”
3. Push	Examples: wall push-up, floor press, shoulder press. Choose an angle and load that let you keep the shoulders controlled and the reps smooth.
4. Pull	Examples: one-arm dumbbell row, band row. Pull with the back and arms without shrugging the shoulders toward the ears.
5. Carry/Core	Examples: suitcase carry, dead bug. Train the trunk to resist unwanted movement while breathing normally and staying tall.

What about lunges and step-ups?

They are excellent single-leg options and fit naturally into the squat pattern. Add them when your balance and joint comfort allow.

- A full-body session can be as simple as one exercise from each pattern.
- Use controlled repetitions. You do not need to move slowly on purpose, but avoid rushing through the range.
- If an exercise causes sharp, unusual or worsening pain, stop and choose a different variation.

5. Build a Routine You Can Actually Stick With

Start smaller than you think you need. You can always add more once the routine is established.

Begin with two full-body strength sessions each week on non-consecutive days. If recovery is good and you enjoy training more often, add a third day later.

Warm-up: 3-5 minutes

Walk, cycle, march in place, then perform a few easy practice repetitions of the first two exercises. Your warm-up should prepare you, not tire you out.

Starter Workout A

Exercise	Sets x Reps	Notes
Goblet squat or sit-to-stand	2 x 8-12	Controlled depth
One-arm dumbbell row	2 x 8-12/side	Pause briefly at top
Dumbbell or band chest press	2 x 8-12	Keep ribs controlled
Romanian deadlift	2 x 8-12	Hips back, weights close
Dead bug	2 x 5-8/side	Slow and controlled

Starter Workout B

Exercise	Sets x Reps	Notes
Reverse lunge or step-up	2 x 6-10/side	Use support if needed
Dumbbell shoulder press	2 x 8-12	Seated or standing
Bent-over dumbbell row or band row	2 x 10-15	Keep shoulders down
Glute bridge	2 x 10-15	Pause at the top
Suitcase carry	2 x 20-40 sec/side	Stand tall; do not lean

6. Your Two-Week Starter Plan

The best program is the one you can repeat long enough to get stronger.

Exercise	Sets x Reps	Notes
Week 1 - Day 1	Workout A	Leave 2-3 reps in reserve
Week 1 - Day 3 or 4	Workout B	Use the same loads unless too easy/hard
Week 2 - Day 1	Workout A	Add 1 rep where form is solid
Week 2 - Day 3 or 4	Workout B	Add 1 rep or a small amount of weight

How to know you are progressing

Over several weeks, you are able to perform more repetitions with the same weight, use slightly more resistance with good form, or complete the same work with greater control and confidence.

- Keep a simple note on your phone: exercise, weight used and repetitions completed.
- If sleep or recovery is poor, keep the habit but reduce a set or use a slightly lighter load.
- If you miss a workout, do not “make up” all the missed work. Resume the next planned session.
- Walking, cycling, mobility work and other activities can complement strength training, but they do not replace progressive resistance work.

Your next goal

Repeat this structure for 4-6 weeks before deciding you need a completely new routine. Small progression over time is the point.

7. Keep Going

Strength is built one repeatable session at a time.



Meet Caroline Gladwin

Caroline is an A.C.E. Certified Personal Trainer and Health Coach with more than 20 years of experience helping women become stronger, healthier and more confident. She is the owner of Tenacity Fitness, a private women-focused training studio in Studio City, California.

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Important: This guide is for general educational purposes and is not medical advice or individualized exercise prescription. If you have a medical condition, injury, unexplained symptoms, or concerns about starting exercise, consult an appropriate healthcare professional. Stop exercising and seek medical care for concerning symptoms such as chest pain, fainting, severe shortness of breath, or sudden neurological symptoms.