Strength Training at Home

Build muscle with one set of dumbbells

Why resistance training is non-negotiable

Muscle is the **organ of longevity**. It is not just about looking toned — skeletal muscle is metabolically active tissue that shapes how long and how well you live. Higher muscle mass and strength are linked to a markedly lower risk of **all-cause mortality**, and building and keeping muscle protects against the conditions that most often cut life short: **heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and dementia**. Muscle soaks up blood sugar and improves insulin sensitivity, supports cardiovascular health, loads and strengthens bone, and is tied to better brain health and cognitive resilience as we age. Resistance training is the most direct way to build and defend it.

> On a GLP-1 journey this matters even more. As the weight comes off, resistance training helps ensure what you lose is **fat** — while protecting the metabolically precious muscle you want to keep.

The three levers that build muscle

1. **Progressive overload.** Muscle grows when you keep asking it to do slightly more than last time. In practice that means either **adding weight**, or **adding reps** at a given weight, over time. Track your workouts and aim to beat your previous numbers.

2. **Train close to failure.** To signal growth, take each working set to the point where you could **maybe squeeze out one or two more reps** with good form — but no more. That last effortful stretch is what drives the adaptation.

3. **Fuel it — protein & creatine.** Muscle is built from protein, so eat enough: a **minimum of about 100 g per day** works for most people (more if you are larger or very active). And supplement with **creatine monohydrate, 5 g daily** — one of the most studied, safest, and most effective supplements for strength, muscle, and even cognition.

Do these three things consistently, and the plan on the next page does the rest. Because it alternates upper- and lower-body days, you can train on back-to-back days — just let a muscle group recover before you train it hard again.

About the author — Dr. Patrick Taylor, MD

I'm a board-certified family medicine physician and the Chief Medical Officer of Belle, where I lead protocol development for women's hormone, metabolic, and longevity care nationally. I trained at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, completed my family medicine residency at the University of Utah, and I'm a Menopause Society Certified Practitioner.

My interest in this isn't only clinical. I was close to 300 pounds starting medical school and lost 100 pounds through diet and training. That's a large part of why I practice the way I do — evidence first, individualized second, no hype — and why I believe strength training belongs in every longevity plan.

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Your 4-Day Dumbbell Plan

One set of dumbbells · Tap any exercise name for a video demo

Alternate upper- and lower-body days. Do **3 sets of 6–8 reps** for every main lift, choosing a weight that brings you close to failure by the last rep. Planks, wall sits, and core moves are held or performed **until failure**.

Day 1 — Upper Body

Dumbbell Chest Press	3 × 6–8
Dumbbell Bicep Curls	3 × 6–8
Dumbbell Tricep Extensions	3 × 6–8
Dumbbell Hammer Curls	3 × 6–8
★ Bonus: Plank Hold (arms extended)	To failure

Day 2 — Lower Body

Goblet Squat (single dumbbell)	3 × 6–8
Dumbbell Split Squat	3 × 6–8 / leg
Dumbbell Step-Ups	3 × 6–8
Wall Sit	To failure
★ Core: Bicycle Crunches	To failure
★ Core: Exercise Ball Crunches	To failure
★ Core: Elbow Plank	To failure

Day 3 — Upper Body

Dumbbell Shoulder Press	3 × 6–8
Single-Arm Bent-Over Row	3 × 6–8 / arm
Dumbbell Lateral Raises	3 × 6–8
Countertop Push-Ups	3 × to failure
Dead Hang	To failure

Day 4 — Lower Body

Dumbbell RDL	3 × 6–8
Dumbbell Reverse Lunges	3 × 6–8
Bodyweight Lateral Lunges	3 × 6–8
Burnout: Air Squats (bodyweight)	Max reps
★ Core: Bicycle Crunches	To failure
★ Core: Exercise Ball Crunches	To failure
★ Core: Elbow Plank	To failure

Every exercise name is a **clickable link** to a YouTube form demo. ★ marks bonus and core work — on both lower-body days, finish with the core circuit. Progress each week by nudging the weight up or adding a rep.

No dumbbells? No problem. Many of these moves swap cleanly for **kettlebells, resistance bands, or bodyweight** — e.g. band curls and presses, a kettlebell goblet squat or RDL, or bodyweight squats, lunges, and push-ups. Use whatever you have and keep taking each set close to failure.

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