

How Much Protein You Really Need After 50

Stay strong and steady on your own
two feet for decades to come.



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A group of older adults were given extra protein every day for weeks. A second group lifted weights. A third group did nothing at all.

At the end, everyone's strength was tested. You'd put your money on the protein group, wouldn't you? That's what every shake tub and every health headline has been promising for years.

The people who took protein and didn't train finished exactly where the do-nothing group finished.

Protein matters more after 50 than at any other time in your life, so that result surprised a lot of people. But protein is building material, and your muscles only build when you give them a reason to.

Get both right and the results are big. Get one without the other and you're paying for bricks that never leave the truck.

So think about what you want the next 30 years to look like.

Maybe it's carrying all the shopping in one trip, getting down on the floor with your grandkids and back up without a hand, or walking the hills on holiday while people half your age stop for breath.

I wrote this for the man or woman over 50 who wants exactly that, and who's tired of being told something as vague as "eat more protein".

You're going to get real numbers, real meals and a plan that fits a real week.

Here's what I believe. The protein number most people go by was never meant for you.

It was worked out to stop younger adults falling short, and it sits well below what expert groups now say people over 50 need.

I also believe the bathroom scale is the worst way to judge your health after 50, because it can't see the muscle you're losing.

And I believe the biggest protein fix in your whole day is the meal almost nobody thinks about.

The stakes are real. After 50, most people lose about 5 to 10% of their muscle every ten years.

But look at what happens when people do this properly.

In strength programmes for older adults, people pushed close to a third more weight with their legs.

And in one programme, the strength people built was still there six months after they stopped training.

In the pages ahead you'll find:

- Your own daily protein number in grams, worked out for your weight in under a minute
- Why the same meal feeds your muscles less now than it did at 30, and how to make up for it
- The one meal where your protein quietly goes missing, and the easy way to fix it
- Three full sample days of eating, from about 90 g to 140 g of protein

- The simple strength routine that makes every gram you eat count, even at home
- How to protect your muscle while losing weight, including on weight-loss injections
- What to track instead of the scale, so you know within three months that it's working

Starting is easy. You don't need to weigh every bite or buy anything special, and most of the food that does this job is cheap and probably in your kitchen already. Change one meal tomorrow and you've begun.

By the end you'll know your number, what a day of hitting it looks like, and exactly what to do with your muscles so they use it.

Let's get those bricks off the truck.



The 0.8 g Rule Was Never Written for You

The figure you'll see on most labels and websites is 0.8 grams of protein for every kilogram you weigh, each day.

That number is the minimum that keeps a healthy younger adult from running short, so it was set for someone much younger than a 60-year-old trying to keep their muscle.

Expert groups who look at older adults have all landed higher.

A large group of nutrition and ageing specialists from Europe recommends **at least 1.0 to 1.2 g per kilogram** for healthy people over 50.

They raise that to 1.2 to 1.5 g for anyone living with an illness, whether it's a short one or a long-term condition.

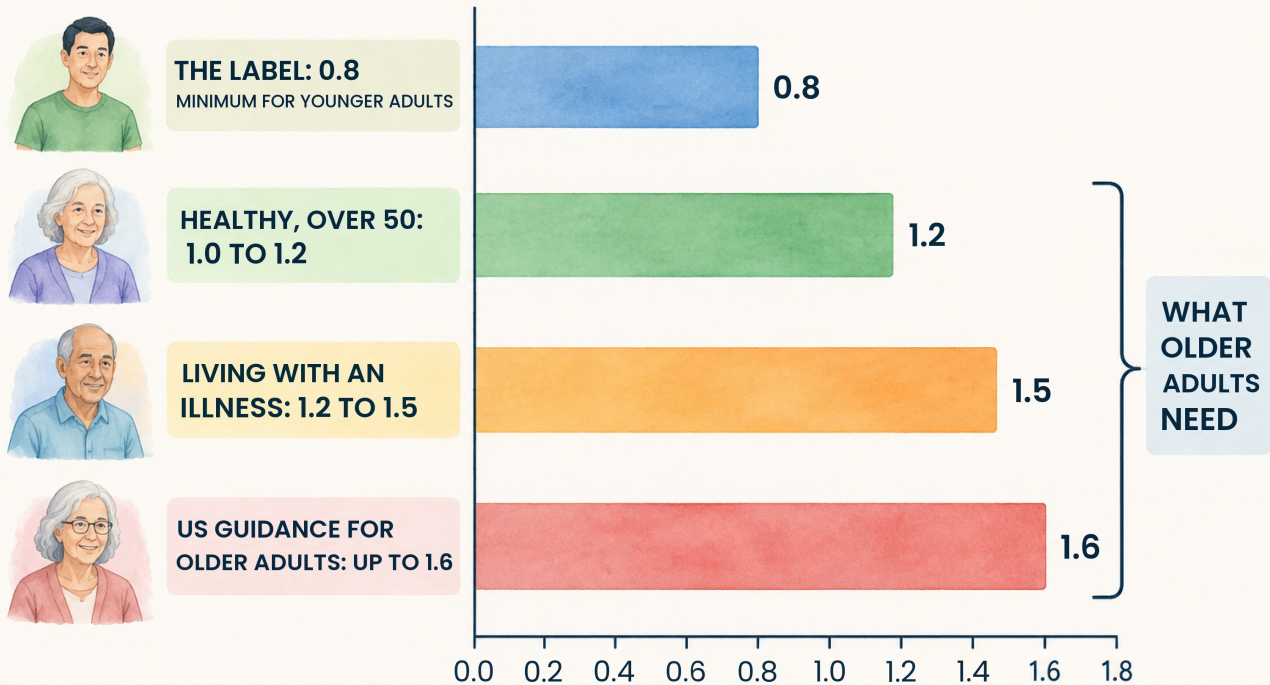
Guidance for older adults in the United States goes higher again, up to 1.6 g per kilogram.

Meanwhile, surveys of what people actually eat show plenty of over-50s sitting below these targets without knowing it.

They eat what feels like a normal, healthy diet, and it just falls short of what an older body needs.

So if you've been aiming for the number on the label, you've been aiming for the bare minimum, and your muscles need more than that.

GRAMS OF PROTEIN PER KG OF BODY WEIGHT, EACH DAY



Your Daily Target in Grams, for Men and Women

The guidelines are set per kilogram of body weight, so men usually end up with a bigger number simply because they tend to weigh more.

A woman and a man who weigh the same need the same amount.

To find yours, multiply your weight in kilograms by 1.2.

If you think in pounds, halve your weight in pounds and you'll land close enough.

So a woman of about 70 kg (around 155 lb) is aiming for roughly 70 to 85 g a day, and a man of about 90 kg (around 200 lb) is aiming for roughly 90 to 110 g.

 Your Daily Protein Target  for Men and women over 50 who want to stay strong, steady and independent.		
	Old label number	Over 50 target
60 kg / 132 lb:	48 g	60 to 72 g
70 kg / 154 lb:	56 g	70 to 84 g
80 kg / 176 lb:	64 g	80 to 96 g
90 kg / 198 lb:	72 g	90 to 108 g
100 kg / 220 lb:	80 g	100 to 120 g

Find your weight and read across to see how far above the label number your real target sits.

Aim for the top of your range, or a little above it, if any of these fit you: you live with a long-term health condition, you're getting over an illness or an operation, you're training hard, or you're losing weight.

In those cases, 1.5 g per kilogram is a sensible goal, which is about 105 g a day for someone who weighs 70 kg.

Carrying a lot of extra weight? Doctors and dietitians often work out protein from a healthier body weight instead of your current one, so a quick chat with your doctor will stop you chasing a number that's bigger than you need.

One plain warning: if you've been told you have kidney disease, check your protein target with your doctor before you raise it, because the caution about protein and kidneys applies to kidneys that are already damaged.

Why the Same Meal Feeds Your Muscles Less After 50

Every time you eat protein, it sends a signal to your muscles to repair and rebuild.

As we get older, muscles stop hearing that signal as well.

They still respond, but it takes a bigger dose of protein to get the same rebuilding going.

Scientists call this **anabolic resistance**, which simply means your muscles have become a bit deaf to the "build" message.

A few everyday things make it worse. Sitting still for long stretches turns the volume down further.

So does being ill, sleeping badly, and eating too little food overall, which is why a strict diet can quietly cost you muscle.

This matters because of what that muscle does for you.

Ageing hits hardest at the fast muscle fibres, the ones that react in a split second when you trip on a kerb, and people can lose up to three quarters of them.

About one in three people over 65 has a fall each year, and more than one fall in ten ends in a broken bone.

For women, menopause adds a twist that the scale hides completely. A long study followed more than 1,200 women through menopause.

Their weight didn't climb any faster than before, but underneath, fat built up faster and muscle switched from slowly growing to slowly shrinking.

That means a woman can weigh the same at 55 as she did at 45 and still have less muscle holding her up.

Protein and strength work are how she gets it back.

To me, healthy aging means taking care of both my body and mind so I can avoid serious illnesses. With proper self-care, age is merely a number.

A 62-year-old woman, speaking in a study on healthy ageing

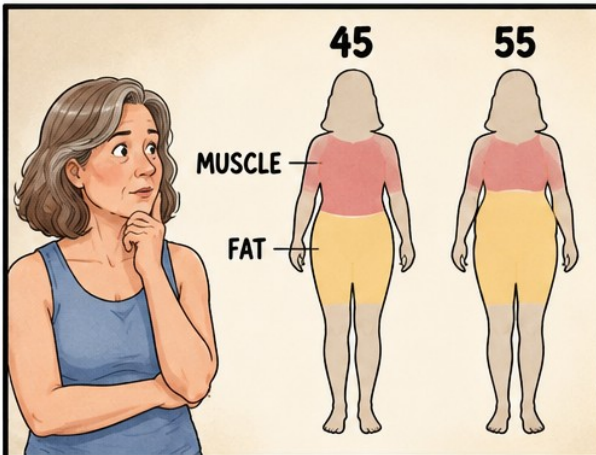
**AFTER MENOPAUSE YOUR WEIGHT CAN STAY THE SAME
WHILE YOU LOSE MUSCLE, SO THE SCALE CANNOT TELL YOU THE TRUTH**



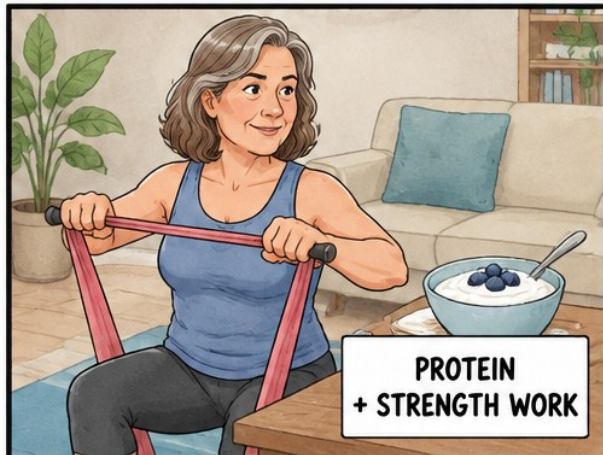
**AT 45, THE WOMAN STEPS ON THE SCALE
AND IS HAPPY WITH HER WEIGHT.**



**AT 55, THE SCALE SHOWS EXACTLY THE SAME
WEIGHT, SO SHE THINKS NOTHING HAS CHANGED.**



**UNDERNEATH, FAT HAS BUILT UP AND MUSCLE
HAS STARTED TO SHRINK, EVEN THOUGH HER
WEIGHT HAS NOT MOVED.**



**PROTEIN AND STRENGTH WORK ARE HOW SHE
WINS BACK THE MUSCLE THE SCALE NEVER
SHOWED HER LOSING.**

Protein Without Lifting Did Nothing in the Trials

This is the part most protein advice leaves out. Protein is the material, and strength training is the signal that tells your body to use it. Without the signal, the extra protein has nowhere useful to go.

Three trials in older adults tested this. The people who only took extra protein ended up no stronger than the people who did nothing.

The people who trained got stronger, and so did the people who trained and ate the extra protein.

So for you, every gram of protein you eat works best when you're also asking your muscles to do some work.

How often you train turns out to matter a lot. One programme of two sessions a week for ten weeks made no real difference.

Another of **three sessions a week for twelve weeks** cut fat and strengthened bones in older women carrying extra weight.

When older adults trained properly, they pushed close to a third more weight with their legs and about a quarter more with their arms.

You don't need a gym to do this.

Studies of people training at home with resistance bands, bags of rice, getting up from a chair and carrying things found their legs got stronger too.

The weight should feel fairly heavy by the last few repeats, while you can still keep good form.



A chair, a band and a couple of bags of rice are enough to give your muscles the signal they need.

How to start

- 1 Pick three days a week, such as Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and put them in your diary like appointments.
- 2 Choose four moves that cover your whole body: standing up from a chair, a push against a wall or kitchen counter, a pull with a resistance band, and carrying two heavy bags across the room.
- 3 Do two or three rounds of each, about seven to ten repeats per round, using a weight that makes the last few hard work.
- 4 When a move starts to feel easy, make it a little harder with a heavier bag, a lower chair or a stronger band.

- 5 If you have a heart condition, sore joints or haven't exercised in years, run your plan past your doctor or a physiotherapist first.
-

Breakfast Is Where Your Protein Goes Missing

Most people eat a big helping of protein at dinner and very little in the morning.

Toast, cereal, a piece of fruit and a cup of tea might add up to only a few grams.

Your muscles then go from the night before to lunchtime with hardly anything to build with.

Because older muscles need a bigger dose to get going, spreading protein across the day makes sense, and **breakfast is the easiest win**. Fix that one meal and you've usually closed a large part of the gap without touching the rest of your day.

It helps to know roughly what common foods give you, and a rough idea is all you need.

Protein in Everyday Foods



Chicken breast, 100 g: 31 g



Tinned tuna, 100 g: 25 g



Salmon, 100 g: 25 g



3 large eggs: 18 g



Greek yoghurt, 200 g: 18 g



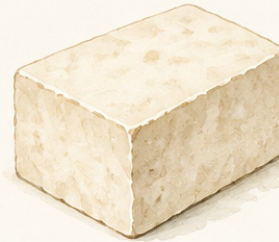
Cottage cheese, 150 g: 15 g



Glass of milk, 250 ml: 8 g



Cooked lentils, 1 cup: 18 g



Firm tofu, 100 g: 12 g

A palm-sized piece of meat or fish gets you around 25 to 30 g, which is a strong start to any meal.

Some of the best protein is also the cheapest.

Eggs, tinned fish, milk powder and lentils cost little and keep well, which matters if you're living on a pension.

If chewing is hard, because of dentures or because a weight-loss medicine has left you queasy, soft foods do the job just as well: Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese, scrambled eggs, tinned fish, milk, or a scoop of protein powder stirred into your porridge.

Three Sample Days, From 90 g to 140 g

Pick the day closest to your daily target from the weight chart above.

Each day puts a solid protein food at every meal, and you can swap any item for another food from the everyday foods chart with about the same protein.

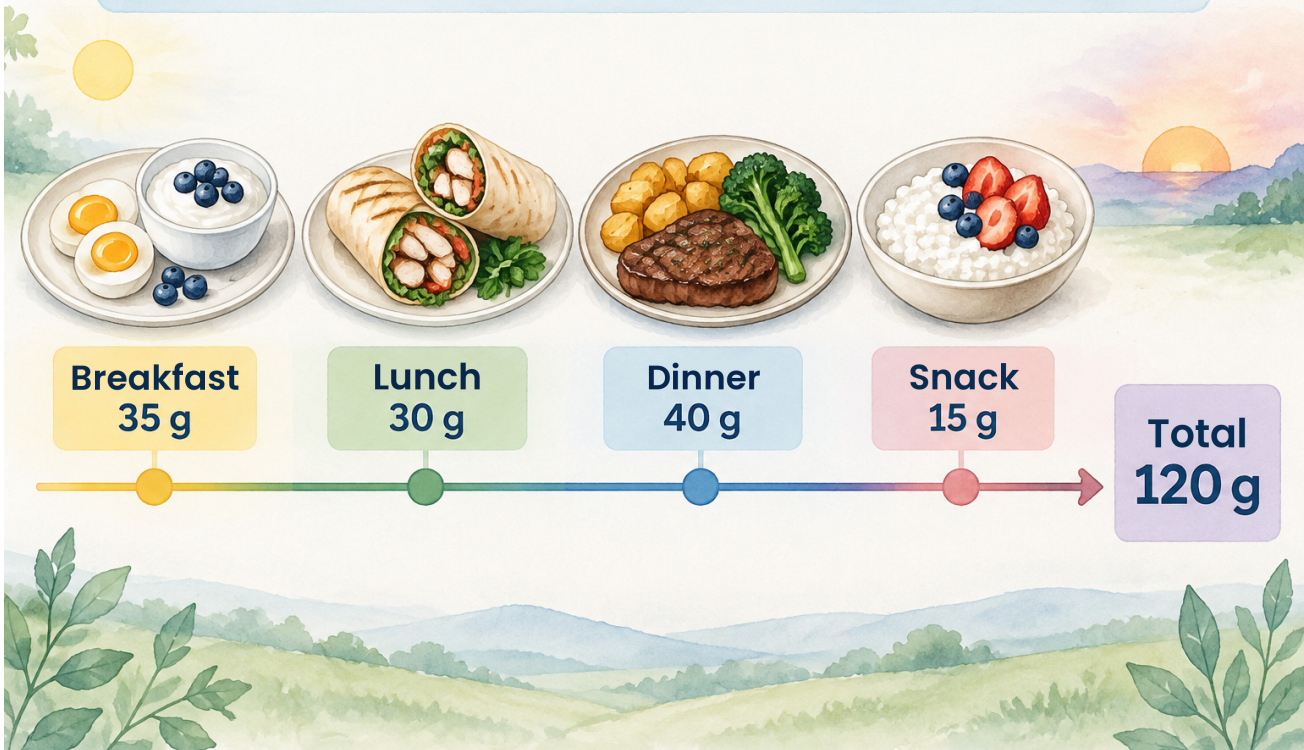
About 90 g a day, which suits most women around 60 to 70 kg:

- Breakfast, about 30 g: 200 g of Greek yoghurt with berries, and two boiled eggs.
- Lunch, about 25 g: a tin of tuna on a jacket potato or in a salad.
- Dinner, about 30 g: a salmon fillet of around 120 g with vegetables and rice.
- Snack, about 10 g: a large glass of milk or a small pot of cottage cheese.

About 120 g a day, which suits most men and women around 80 kg, or anyone lighter who is unwell or losing weight:

- Breakfast, about 35 g: three scrambled eggs on toast, with a pot of Greek yoghurt on the side.
- Lunch, about 30 g: a chicken breast of around 100 g in a sandwich, wrap or soup.
- Dinner, about 40 g: about 150 g of lean beef in a stir fry or with potatoes and greens.
- Snack, about 15 g: a tub of cottage cheese with crackers or fruit.

How 120 g Fits Into One Day



Spreading protein across four meals means no single plate has to carry the whole day.

About 140 g a day, which suits most men around 90 to 95 kg:

- Breakfast, about 40 g: three eggs, a pot of Greek yoghurt and a glass of milk.
- Lunch, about 35 g: a chicken breast of around 120 g with salad or soup.
- Dinner, about 45 g: a large salmon fillet of around 180 g with vegetables.
- Snack, about 20 g: a scoop of whey protein shaken in water or milk.

If you don't eat meat or fish, the same plan works with tofu, lentils, eggs and dairy, though you'll eat bigger portions to get the same protein.

A cup of cooked lentils gives you about the same as three eggs.

Treat any “per meal” number as a handy guide It helps you spread protein through the day, so never skip a meal’s protein because you think your body won’t use it.

Losing Weight Without Losing Your Muscle

Losing weight after 50 can take muscle with it, so this is when protein and strength training matter most.

Eating less usually means eating less protein too, and your muscles feel the shortfall.

Weight-loss injections show this clearly.

Across 25 studies that scanned people’s bodies while they lost weight, close to **a third of the weight lost was lean tissue**, which includes muscle.

In women past menopause, hip bones also got thinner during hard dieting.

So if you’re losing weight, keep your protein at the top of your range, around 1.5 g per kilogram, and keep your three strength sessions going.

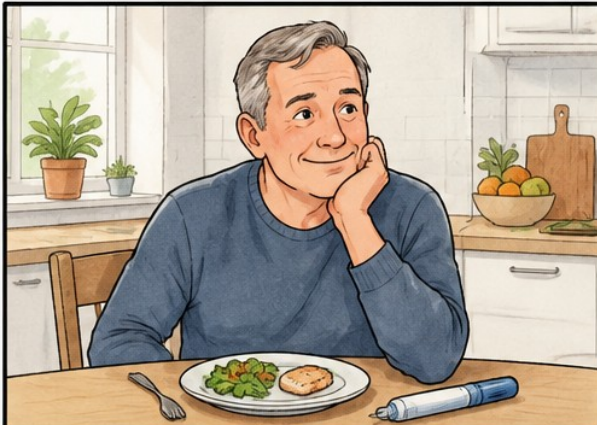
That way more of what you lose is fat, and you keep the muscle that holds you up.

Protein on its own won’t stop hunger, though.

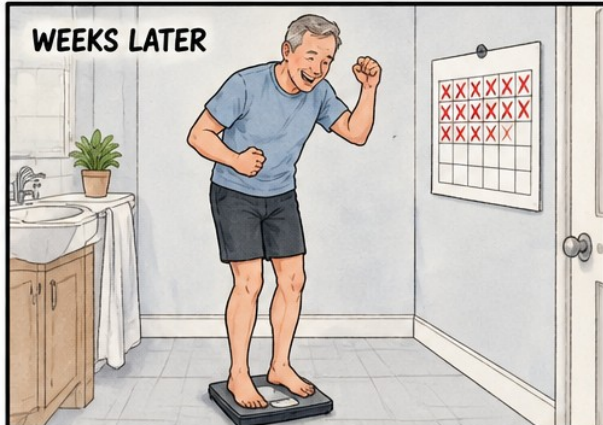
One man who wrote online about eating huge amounts of protein with very little fat said he was hungry and thinking about his next meal all day.

A balanced plate, with some fat and plenty of vegetables alongside your protein, keeps you fuller than chasing a giant protein number.

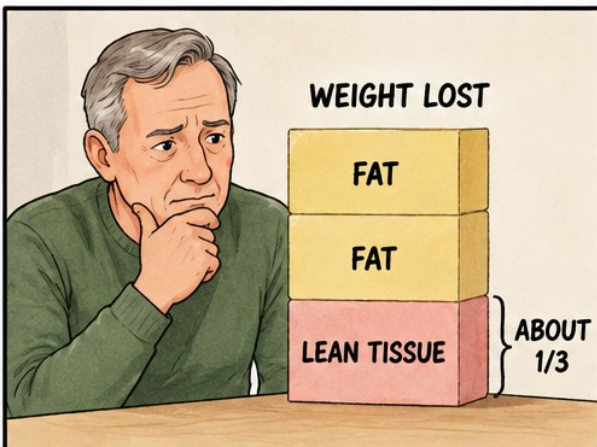
WHEN YOU LOSE WEIGHT AFTER 50, KEEP YOUR PROTEIN HIGH AND KEEP TRAINING SO YOU LOSE FAT RATHER THAN MUSCLE



HE STARTS A WEIGHT-LOSS INJECTION AND EATS MUCH LESS THAN BEFORE.



THE SCALE GOES DOWN WEEK AFTER WEEK, AND HE IS DELIGHTED.



BUT ACROSS 25 STUDIES, CLOSE TO A THIRD OF THE WEIGHT PEOPLE LOST WAS LEAN TISSUE, WHICH INCLUDES MUSCLE.



KEEP YOUR PROTEIN AT ABOUT 1.5 GRAMS PER KILOGRAM AND KEEP YOUR THREE STRENGTH SESSIONS, SO MORE OF WHAT YOU LOSE IS FAT.

Do You Need a Protein Powder?

Food comes first, and a powder is just a convenient way to fill a gap.

If you're struggling to reach your number, a scoop in porridge, a smoothie or a glass of milk adds about 20 g with no cooking.

That's genuinely useful when your appetite is low or chewing is hard.

What you don't need is an expensive blend of powders and pills promising to fix everything.

Plenty of people have spent hundreds on subscriptions and noticed nothing, because a long list of ingredients and glowing reviews doesn't prove a product will make you stronger.

Plain protein from the supermarket does the same job.

You may also have heard that protein weakens your bones by pulling calcium out of them.

People who eat more protein tend to have better bones, so you can drop that worry and keep your eye on the strength work, which is what really builds bone.



What to Expect in 12 Weeks, and How to Tell It's Working

Give it about **twelve weeks** of hitting your protein and training three times a week.

That's the length of programme where older adults have shown real, measurable gains in strength.

Leave the scale alone while you do it.

Muscle builds slowly and fat can drop at the same time, so your weight may hardly move even when your body is changing for the better.

Watch these things instead:

- How many times you can stand up from a chair and sit back down in 30 seconds without using your hands.
- How easily you open jars and grip heavy bags, which shows the strength in your hands.
- Your waist measurement, which shows fat leaving even when your weight doesn't.
- How quickly and steadily you walk, especially up stairs and slopes.
- How heavy the weekly shopping feels when you carry it in from the car.

Check the chair test today, write the number down, and test again in twelve weeks.

When it goes up, you'll know your protein is finally being turned into muscle, and the strength you build will stay with you long after.



If this helped, follow me for more simple, honest ways to stay strong and healthy after 50.

- **Instagram @wellspringofyouth**

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