



28 DAYS TOP CHALLENGE

Introduction

Welcome to the first TOP 28 day challenge*! I hope you're excited and eager to get going. Below you'll find all the information you need.

- Skip to the workout section if that's all you're here for!
- If you like data and to see proof of positive change, complete the self-assessment section first.
- If you haven't done something like this before, I strongly recommend you go through the goal setting section. This will help you stick to the challenge for the full 28 days.
- If eating well is in your plans too, I've included a nutrition section at the end of the document.

*I debated what exactly to call this. A 'programme', 'process' or 'journey' are also accurate. Bottom line is: you can approach this with whatever mindset you like best.

Self-Assessment – 'Point A'

Depending on why you're doing this, you may like to do one or all of the below self-assessments.

- A mobility self-check: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSIhJiOR_SQ
- Current weight.
- Current measurements (e.g. your waistline, your thighs, your arms).
- An overview of your current energy levels/mood/sleep quality from day to day.

Choose what's most interesting or relevant to your situation so you know your 'Point A' and can refer back to see the changes at the end of the 28 days.

Goal Setting – 'Point B'

Why are you here? Where do you want to get to?

Sometimes people try too hard to focus on the physical results and miss the emotional aspect. For example, losing 5 lbs is all well and good but *why* do you want to lose that weight? What will the benefits be? Because that's the important part and that's the part you need to keep reminding yourself when you don't feel like doing your exercise or choosing a healthy meal or going to bed early, etc.

It's the same when someone tells me they want to get stronger. Why do you want to get stronger? Do you have low bone density that you're worried about? Do you feel you can't pick up your child easily as they're getting older and bigger? Is your dog too strong for you on the lead? Does it give you better self-confidence? More independence?

Once you have your emotional WHY figured out, then you can consider the HOW. How will you successfully move towards your goal? If your aim is simply to move more do you have to complete all the workouts? Or is one a week really all you need? If you're looking to lose weight, how will you prevent yourself from eating too much if the workouts increase your appetite?



The how section can be considered in positive (you do what you plan to) and negative (you don't do what you said you would do) ways.

- Positive – the actions you take that will make you feel successful.
- Negatives – the conditions that lead to a failed result. What about your environment will block your positive actions? What will be the barriers to your success? What made you fall off the wagon before and how you will you respond differently this time?

TASK

<p>Describe your physical WHY for doing this challenge</p>	
<p>Describe your emotional WHY</p>	
<p>List the positive actions that will make you successful for your WHY</p>	
<p>List the barriers that could prevent you from being successful and how you will deal with them</p>	
<p>Barriers</p>	<p>Preventive Measures</p>



The Workouts!

Here you'll see a target of 4 exercise sessions per week, with one of them being a recovery and stretch session. Use your goals above to decide how many and which type you're going to aim for. Remember, these sessions can be repeated with membership access for as many months as you like so you can start small and work up!

A note on Equipment:

The majority of exercises are bodyweight but you can benefit by adding in weight if they're available and you're confident to use them. If you don't have official equipment, a lot of things can be fashioned from home materials. For example, a small backpack of books can be used in place of a kettlebell, a bottle of water in place of a dumbbell, couches instead of a bench, etc. The important part is that you use the equipment in a safe manner.

Quick tips

- Stop if you feel pain; move on from the exercise or adjust it to a pain free version, e.g. by removing weight or changing position.
- Have water at the ready!
- Make sure you don't burn yourself out in week 1 by being too enthusiastic too soon and overdoing it!

The Programme

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Day 1	A) Beginner's Exercise Class – 18 minutes OR B) General Strength A – 18 minutes	General Strength B 17 minutes	General Strength C 25 minutes	Full Body Session 26 minutes
Day 2	Mobility Flow 6 minutes	Balance and Abs 5 minutes + 19 minutes	Turkish Get Up 5 Minute Workout	10 Minute HIT
Day 3	Isometric Challenges 26 minutes	A Pandemic Home Workout! 26 Minutes	Isometric Challenges 26 minutes	Balance and Abs 5 minutes + 19 minutes
Day 4	Stretch/Recover A 35 minutes	Stretch/Recover B 15 minutes	Stretch/Recover A 35 minutes	Stretch/Recover B 15 minutes
End of Week	Praise yourself for anything you did this week that was new, difficult for you and/or more than what you did last week for your physical health.	Remember your 'why' for doing this as you get to this critical halfway point where things become less novel.	75% of the way through! Is there anything you want to change for your final week?	Congratulations – you did it! I hope you're seeing the results you aimed for and have adopted some good habits along the way.

Repeat the cycle for as long as you like while you're part of the member's portal! There will also be new workouts added weekly and new programmes like the one above will be written every couple of months.

[Member's Portal – Physical Therapy and Strength Training](#)

Nutrition guidelines

These are some evidence-based tips for healthy eating habits which go hand in hand with wanting to feel and move better.



1. Eat within a limited timeframe daily; 8-12 hours is recommended. This allows the digestive system more time to repair itself from day to day from all the work it does for us when we eat. By choosing to eat breakfast and skip late night snacks I think you will be more successful in the long run for energy management but it is better to go with what you can stick to and what feels good for **YOU**.
2. Eat fresh fruit and vegetables daily. You'll get prebiotics from the fibre, which provides the workers in your gut more energy and keeps them healthy. You'll also get nice amounts of probiotics (healthy micro-organisms) to help keep your gut microbiome diverse (which is linked with stronger immune systems).
3. If you're looking to lose weight, give up alcohol altogether or stick to 2 units or less per week. This isn't just about calorie restriction; being hungover and/or reducing the quality of your sleep by consuming alcohol will negatively impact your willpower and physical tolerance for exercise.



4. Make your own snacks rather than eating storebought. You won't need to use any preservatives, you can control the amount of sugar you use and you can add ingredients that give it an extra kick of health; for example adding in pumpkin seeds into fairy cakes will increase the fibre content and lower the glycaemic load (which means the sugar will be more slowly released into your bloodstream).
5. Make your home environment supportive: do not buy anything in the grocery shop that requires willpower to avoid eating and ask your housemates/family to do the same. Put things like home-baked goods into the freezer so you have more time to decide if you really want to eat them or not.

Read: [The Best Probiotic? Fruits and Vegetables. - The Atlantic](#)

I personally find, and hear from clients, that snacks are the hardest things to avoid or get right. Point #4 and #5 will hopefully help with that but you should also recognise that if you are desperately craving sugar you are probably not satisfying your brain with enough nutrients overall, including good fats. Make it simple and add salad to every meal! You can also try adding in a daily supplement.

I'm also going to give some recipes below to help you avoid caving in to highly sweet, processed foods when you really don't want to.

Wholewheat (Irish) pancakes – prep time 5 minutes

Makes 3 large pancakes

Ingredients

100g wholegrain (e.g. spelt, oat, wheat) flour

300ml milk of choice (or dilute for fewer calories with 80ml of milk and 220 ml of water)

1 egg

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients together with a hand whisk or stand mixer until ingredients combine.
2. Leave to chill in the fridge for 12 minutes (optional). If you follow this step, you might need to do a quick re-whisk (with a fork is enough) just before cooking as the ingredients will have separated a bit.
3. Ready up the frying pan on a medium-high heat with some butter or coconut oil. Pour out a thin layer of pancake mixture so it just covers the pan. Cook for approximately 2 minutes on each side.
4. Add savoury or sweet toppings!





Seed bar – prep time 10 minutes

(Add on 25 minutes if making your own nut/seed butter)

This is a recipe I first found online and have since made heaps of variations as it's very forgiving. You'll want a tray about 9x9 inch or similar.

Ingredients

2 cups of assorted nuts and seeds (or I often use just seeds)

½ cup of milled flaxseed/chia seeds (optional*)

½ cup shredded, desiccated coconut (optional*)

½ cup coconut oil or butter

2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup

1 tsp vanilla essence

100g dark chocolate (ideally 70% or higher), melted

Directions for homemade nut/seed butter:

1. Take a cup of seeds or nuts and roast them at 180°C for 8-10 minutes or until just beginning to brown. In an air fryer it takes just 2-3 minutes. They will quickly burn so keep close to them!
2. Place them in your food processor and put on high for 8-10 minutes until smooth and creamy. You will need to scrape down the sides from time to time. To help creaminess and speed of conversion at the end you can add in a little bit of oil.

Directions for bars:

1. Process all the nuts and seeds until they're in small pieces but not completely fine.
2. Add the nut/seed butter, oil/butter, sweetener of choice and vanilla essence and blend until ingredients come together evenly.
3. Spread all ingredients in your tray.
4. Melt your dark chocolate and spread it on top. Place in the fridge until it solidifies.

**Your bar will end up different thicknesses from batch to batch depending on how many of the ingredients you use.*

Strawberry Oat Bar – prep time 10 minutes

Taken directly from here: [My Kitchen Snippets: Strawberry Oatmeal Bars](#)



Ingredients

- 1 cup flour (white or wholewheat)
- 1 ¼ cup of quick cooking oats
- 1-2 tbsp honey
- ½ tsp salt (leave out if using salted butter)
- 6 tbsp butter (or margarine for vegan), melted
- 1 cup all fruit strawberry jam (or other jam of choice)
- ½ cup unsweetened shredded coconut

Directions:

1. Prepare an 8x8 square pan and line it with aluminium foil (or a [reusable baking sheet](#)) and heat oven to 180°C.
2. In a bowl, combine flour, oats and salt.
3. Mix the honey into the melted butter and pour it into the flour mixture. Stir until crumbly. Set aside ½ cup of the mixture.
4. Press the remaining crumb evenly into the pan. Spread the jam over it.
5. Combine the coconut with the reserved crumb mixture and sprinkle over the jam.
6. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool and cut into bars.



Disclaimer

All of this information is shared for the intended use of adults medically cleared to participate in a largely self-directed exercise programme. Participants are responsible for their own activity levels and interpretations of the information within. None of the advice in this document is intended to be medical advice. Stop if you have pain and seek professional help where warranted. By using this content you assume all risks for any resulting losses, injuries or damages.