

# Strength Training

## Keeps Me Moving by Cheryl Plank

When living with multiple sclerosis there is truth to the statement, “if you don’t use it, you lose it.” Since my diagnosis in 1992, I realized the importance of strength training for maintaining or regaining mobility.

One of the best investments I made was a Total Gym to use at home at my own pace and energy level. But equipment isn’t essential. Small free weights can be used at home. There is also a variety of equipment at most wellness facilities. I’m not talking about pumping iron, but rather a slow and mild routine of consistent exercise. My message is to encourage each of us to work a little each day or several days each week according to our own skill and ability level. A physical therapist can teach the type of exercise that is most effective and best for the individual, and then we may be able to continue on our own or with help. A short routine keeps muscles moving, even if that means having a friend or family member work those muscles for us.

Once you have an individualized exercise routine in place, you have the freedom and power to control when, where, how often, and with whom you do it. The important thing is to do something that keeps muscles active—to build back strength or to maintain it.

Maintaining strength may even contribute to achieving dreams that once seemed impossible. In fall 2007, I had the opportunity to travel in Europe. The tour guide warned me that the trip involved a fair amount of walking, but I decided I was up for the challenge. Despite a fast pace, often on cobblestone streets, my adventure in Italy was an experience of a lifetime.

Strength training helped me keep my goals within reach, whether running an errand, lifting an object, or discovering the charm of Tuscany, the history of Rome, or that memorable gondola ride in Venice! ■

Cheryl Plank ▶ has been living with MS since 1992 and participating in the Walk every year since then.

