

5 Simple Resistance Band Exercises to Increase Strength and Improve Posture

Gillian Goerzen, BSc(kin), BCRPA TFL/ PT

Resistance bands are a fabulous tool for the time crunched, busy person looking for a simple fitness solution. They are relatively inexpensive, pack to almost nothing in a suitcase and provide great versatility and variety in exercises.

No longer does the excuse "I don't have time/ money/ equipment/energy to get to the gym" fly! You don't need a gym – all you need is a band (or two of different resistance) and your body to get a terrific strengthening workout in no time flat!

Some things you should know before you start:

- Before you begin any new exercise program, please check with your doctor. To determine whether or not you are ready to start a program you may consider completing a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire or PAR-Q. These can be found online www.uwfitness.uwaterloo.ca/PDF/par-q.pdf and will direct you to speak with your doctor if any concerns arise.
- Resistance bands come in the form of bands or tubes. Bands are the most inexpensive, but can tear with wear - tubes are a little bit heartier and have handles for ease of use and ergonomics but either will serve the purpose. You can purchase bands and tubes at most fitness supply stores – or even some of the big box stores in person or online. Bands are generally sold by the foot for about \$1.50-\$2.00 per foot. Since you only need about 4-5 feet, this may just be the most inexpensive piece of equipment you ever buy! Consider that it is only about the cost of two coffees from your local barista!
- Bands and tubes also come in a variety of resistance levels. Start with an easy to moderate tension and progress to a stronger band once completing the routine becomes easier.

Tips:

- Always warm up before you perform these exercises. Try marching on the spot for 3-5 minutes, or walking up and down a flight of stairs to warm up.
- Complete each exercise in the sequence 12-15 times (until you feel the muscles working – or 'feel the burn'). If you have time you can repeat the entire program 2 times.
- As you progress, and your body adapts to the new exercises, if you no longer feel the muscles working after 12-15 times you can increase up to 20 times. After that, it's time for a higher resistance!
- It shouldn't hurt – if it does, stop the exercise and ask a professional for guidance.
- Make sure you stretch after you perform this workout. You can find a Total Body Stretching Routine online at www.lwhs.com – from the main page, click on "resources."

The exercises:

1. Squat (legs and buttocks)
 - Put the band underneath your feet and the other ends over your shoulders with both hands gripping either end.
 - Slowly sit down into an imaginary chair behind you – keeping your weight through your heels.
 - Don't let your knees go over your toes and keep your back straight.
2. Chest Press (Chest)
 - Sit tall in a chair and wrap the band around the back of your chair or if you are standing, around your back.
 - Place the band under your armpits, and hold your elbows up so that you have a 90° angle in your armpit.
 - Press your arms out to full extension without locking your elbows, and then back to where your elbows are at 90 degrees.
3. Row (mid back)
 - Place the band around a door knob. Keep your knees slightly bent and stand tall.
 - Pull the band towards your sides while thinking about squeezing your shoulder blades together.
 - Keep your elbows close to your sides and your shoulders dropped away from your ears.
4. Split Squats (legs)
 - Place the band under your right foot. Step your right foot forward, keeping your left leg back.
 - Without letting your right knee go beyond your right toe, lower your body by dropping your left knee towards the ground (don't touch).
 - Repeat this exercise 12-15 times on both sides.
5. Bicep Curl (upper arm)
 - Start by standing (harder) or sitting (easier) with the band underneath your feet and your feet and shoulders relaxed.
 - Keeping your elbows by your sides, raise the band towards your chest using your upper arms (biceps).
 - Rotate your hand as you curl up so that when you complete the motion your palms face up.

For a PDF version of this entire workout including pictures – go to www.lwhs.com and from the main page click on “resources.”

This is just a sample of 5 simple exercises, but there are plenty more exercises that you can do with a band. One great resource is “the Resistance Band Workout Book” by Ed McNeely.

Gillian Goerzen (BSc. Kin) is a registered Personal Trainer and Director of Development for LifeWorks Health Solutions. LifeWorks provides outsourced wellness solutions to corporations, resorts and residential developments of all sizes. Whether you are looking for onsite lunch and learns, workshops and team building events or comprehensive development and management of your onsite wellness facility LifeWorks Health Solutions has solutions that will work for you. Visit us online at www.lwhs.com for more information.