Stay Strong, Stay Healthy—Level 2 (SSSH-2) is an evidence-based, eight-week exercise program for older and sedentary, middle-aged adults. SSSH meets the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) recommendations for healthy muscle strengthening activities. Its customized strength training routine provides documented health benefits\(^1\)\(^2\) that help participants live independently longer.

Trained and certified instructors lead the program’s hourlong classes. SSSH classes meet twice each week, and include warm-up activities, strengthening exercises with or without weights and cool-down activities. Participants also are encouraged to do the exercises on their own a third time each week. Over the eight weeks, participants learn the exercises and begin to improve strength and balance. Once a course concludes, participants are encouraged to continue the SSSH program at home or with a community group.

This program utilizes four pieces of equipment: a chair, a yoga mat, if desired, hand weights and adjustable ankle weights. The class includes eight to 10 specific exercises that are performed while seated in a sturdy chair, lying down or standing behind the chair for balance. SSSH-2 classes are unique because hand weights and adjustable ankle weights are provided for participants during classes in which weights are used.

The average SSSH-2 participant is 70 years old, has completed at least two SSSH-1 courses and has a baseline knowledge of strength training. Placing participants in SSSH-2 who have not yet mastered SSSH-1 movements puts them at increased risk for injury. An instructor may have younger participants with a solid foundation in strength training and exercise who want to register for SSSH-2 after only one SSSH-1 course. If so, the instructor may use the fitness assessments to determine if they score well for their age. Use professional judgment to pass these participants on to SSSH-2, taking into account their scores, history of exercise/training, exercise form on SSSH-1 exercises, good attendance and attitude in class. Err on the side of caution.

Participants may experience mild to moderate muscle soreness after each class. Muscle soreness is a sensation that indicates improved muscle strength, but it also may be uncomfortable. This light to moderate sensation of soreness is safe; however, if the soreness lasts longer than two to three days, the participant’s body is indicating that it needs rest to repair tissue.


SSSH-2 is not:
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Cardiac rehab
- Aerobics class
- Weight-loss program
- Yoga, Pilates, tai chi
- Dance aerobics

We do NOT use exercise balls, exercise bands, machines or barbells.
We do NOT ask people to grunt, strain or be in pain (sharp, shooting, etc.).
We do ask people to move to the floor in SSSH-2, but provide alternative exercises for those not comfortable doing so.

Any participant who experiences sharp, persistent, shooting or prolonged pain should stop exercising and consult a care provider.