

# GET IN THE SWING



## Kettlebell workouts rev your metabolism and provide total-body conditioning

**A** kettlebell is a strength training tool that looks like a bowling ball with an attached handle. The kettlebell's unique shape allows for a variety of exercises that use force and momentum. Kettlebells come in different colors, sizes and weights. The best weight to use is one that is challenging but allows for ideal form.

Both men and women can use a kettlebell, although they were first used in Russia in strongmen contests.

Now almost anyone can work out with kettlebells. They improve overall body strength, tone, core strength, balance, coordination and endurance. Also, they work the whole body in an effective, efficient way, making them an ideal functional training tool.

Functional training is the current trend in fitness and sports conditioning programs. Functional training will help you move better to build muscle, burn fat and improve overall muscular performance. Traditional strength training programs use equipment to isolate and train individual muscles. Kettlebell training programs focus on multi-joint exercises that work the whole body in a time-efficient manner. Also, the kettlebell exercises can be performed one after the other, which will get the heart rate pumping to improve cardiovascular fitness.

The most fundamental kettlebell exercise is the swing.

To perform the swing, stand with both feet about shoulder-width apart and place the kettlebell between the feet. Bend the legs and grip the kettlebell with both hands, keep the arms straight, head up, chest lifted and

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shoulders back and down. To lift the kettlebell, drive and snap the hips, squeeze the hamstrings and glutes at the top, keep the spine at neutral and the abdominals braced.

Exhale as the kettlebell is lifted. Let the kettlebell lower between the inner thighs and repeat for 30 to 60 seconds. The swing pace is determined by form, limb length, overall body strength and condition. Over time the swing will become more comfortable.

The goal is to master the swing at a pace that maintains form. To master the swing, pair it with other cardiovascular exercises and/or body weight exercises in a circuit-like fashion.

An initial kettlebell training program could include alternating swings with jumping jacks, push-ups or jumping rope for 30 to 60 seconds for a total of 20 to 30 minutes.

Anyone interested in working out with kettlebells should check with their doctor and receive guidance from a certified personal trainer. Also, to be safe, use kettlebells in a cleared area; wear flat, supportive shoes; and build up the weight gradually making sure to pay attention to how the body feels.



GARY HIGGINS PHOTOS/LIVING WELL

**Cheryl McDermott, a certified personal trainer, demonstrates exercises using kettlebells – an old-school training tool that has become a hot fitness trend.**

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