

FITOVER35.COM

# THE 12-WEEK STRENGTH SYSTEM

A Complete Training Program for Men Over 35

BY FITOVER35.COM

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This program is designed for men who want results without living in the gym. 3–4 sessions per week, 45–60 minutes each. No fluff. No guesswork. Just a proven system that works.

**B E F O R E   Y O U   B E G I N**

# Program Overview

Everything you need to know before you touch a barbell.

## Training Philosophy

This program is built on three principles that never go out of style:

1. **Progressive Overload** — You must do more over time. More weight, more reps, or more sets. If the stimulus doesn't increase, your body has no reason to adapt.
2. **Compound Movements First** — Squats, deadlifts, presses, and rows build the most muscle in the least time. Isolation work is the icing, not the cake.
3. **Adequate Recovery** — You don't grow in the gym. You grow when you rest. At 35+, recovery isn't optional—it's the program.

## Who This Is For

- Men 35 and older who can commit to 3–4 training days per week
- You have at least 6 months of lifting experience (you know the basic movements)
- You want a structured plan, not random workouts from social media
- You understand that consistency beats intensity every single time

**COACH'S NOTE**

If you have existing injuries or medical conditions, get cleared by your doctor first. This is non-negotiable. Training through pain is not toughness—it's stupidity.

## Equipment Needed

**1**

BARBELL + PLATES

**2**

ADJUSTABLE DUMBBELLS

**3**

PULL-UP BAR

**4**

FLAT / INCLINE BENCH

**Adjustable Dumbbells**

Essential for home gyms.  
Replace an entire rack.

[Shop on Amazon](#)**Workout Log Book**

Track every session. What gets measured gets managed.

[Shop on Amazon](#)**Resistance Bands**

Perfect for warm-ups, mobility, and accessory work.

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## How to Use This Program

- 1. Follow the phases in order.** Phase 1 builds the base. Phase 2 builds strength. Phase 3 peaks it. Skipping ahead is how you get hurt.
- 2. Log every session.** Write down the weight, sets, and reps for every exercise. You cannot manage what you don't measure.
- 3. Hit the prescribed RPE.** RPE (Rate of Perceived Exertion) tells you how hard a set should feel on a 1–10 scale. RPE 7 = you could do 3 more reps. RPE 9 = you could do 1 more rep, maybe.
- 4. Rest fully between sets.** This is not cardio. Rest periods exist for a reason. Use them.
- 5. Warm up before every session.** 5 minutes of light cardio + the mobility drills listed. No exceptions.

## How to Choose Starting Weights

For each exercise in Week 1, pick a weight where you can complete all prescribed reps with **2–3 reps left in the tank**. You should finish the set thinking "I could have done more." This is intentional. Week 1 is not the time to test your limits.

If you're unsure, start lighter than you think you should. You can always add weight next week. You can't untie a muscle.

## RPE Scale Reference

RPE	WHAT IT MEANS	REPS LEFT
<b>6</b>	Light effort. Warming up territory.	4+ reps left
<b>7</b>	Moderate. You could do 3 more reps with good form.	3 reps left
<b>8</b>	Hard. You could do 2 more reps, but they'd be tough.	2 reps left
<b>9</b>	Very hard. Maybe 1 more rep if your life depended on it.	1 rep left
<b>10</b>	Maximum effort. Nothing left. (We rarely train here.)	0 reps left

## Standard Warm-Up Protocol (Every Session)

Perform this before every workout. It takes 5–8 minutes. Do not skip it.

- 1. Light cardio** — 3 minutes. Rowing machine, jump rope, or brisk walk. Get blood flowing.
- 2. Arm circles** — 10 forward, 10 backward. Open up the shoulder capsule.
- 3. Band pull-aparts** — 15 reps. Activate rear delts and upper back.
- 4. Bodyweight squats** — 10 reps. Full depth, slow and controlled.
- 5. Hip circles** — 10 each direction. Lubricate the hip joint.
- 6. Cat-cow stretches** — 8 reps. Wake up the spine.
- 7. Ankle circles** — 10 each direction, each foot.

Then do 1–2 light warm-up sets of the first exercise of the day before loading your working weight.

PHASE 1 • WEEKS 1–4

# Foundation

3 days per week (Mon / Wed / Fri). Build movement patterns, base strength, and prepare your joints for heavier loads.

**3**

DAYS PER WEEK

**45**

MINUTES PER SESSION

**7**

TARGET RPE

**4**

WEEK DURATION

## PHASE 1 GOAL

Do not chase heavy weights in this phase. Focus on perfect form, full range of motion, and building a habit. The weights will come. Earn them.

## Week-over-Week Progression (Phase 1)

- **Week 1:** Learn the movements. Use conservative weight. RPE 6–7.
- **Week 2:** Add 5 lbs to compound lifts (squat, bench, deadlift, OHP) if Week 1 felt comfortable.
- **Week 3:** Add another 5 lbs to compounds. Add 2.5 lbs to isolation movements.
- **Week 4:** Same weight as Week 3 but add 1 rep to the final set of each exercise. This is your mini-test.

**Day A: Upper Body**

Monday • ~45 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min light cardio + arm circles + band pull-aparts (15 reps) + 2 light sets of bench press

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Bench Press</b> <i>Retract shoulder blades, feet flat on floor, controlled descent to mid-chest.</i>	<b>3 x 8</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Barbell Bent-Over Row</b> <i>Hinge at hips, back flat, pull to lower ribcage, squeeze shoulder blades.</i>	<b>3 x 8</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Dumbbell Overhead Press</b> <i>Seated or standing, press from shoulders to full lockout without arching low back.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Dumbbell Bicep Curl</b> <i>Keep elbows pinned to sides, full extension at bottom, controlled tempo.</i>	<b>2 x 12</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Overhead Tricep Extension (Dumbbell)</b> <i>Keep elbows pointing forward, lower behind head, extend to full lockout.</i>	<b>2 x 12</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Face Pulls (Band or Cable)</b> <i>Pull to forehead level, externally rotate at end, squeeze rear delts for 1 second.</i>	<b>3 x 15</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 6</b>

**Day B: Lower Body**

Wednesday • ~45 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min light cardio + bodyweight squats (10) + hip circles + ankle circles + 2 light sets of squats

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Back Squat</b> <i>Feet shoulder-width, brace core, break at hips and knees together, hit parallel or below.</i>	<b>3 x 8</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Romanian Deadlift (Barbell)</b> <i>Slight knee bend, hinge at hips, bar stays close to legs, feel the stretch in hamstrings.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Dumbbell Walking Lunges</b> <i>Long stride, front knee tracks over toes, keep torso upright, control the descent.</i>	<b>3 x 10/leg</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Leg Press (or Goblet Squat)</b> <i>Full range of motion, don't lock out knees at top, controlled 3-second negative.</i>	<b>3 x 12</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Standing Calf Raise</b> <i>Full stretch at bottom, pause at top for 1 second, slow negative.</i>	<b>3 x 15</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Plank Hold</b> <i>Elbows under shoulders, squeeze glutes, brace like you're about to get punched.</i>	<b>3 x 30–45s</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>

**Day C: Full Body**

Friday • ~50 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min light cardio + full warm-up protocol + 2 light sets of deadlift

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Conventional Deadlift</b> <i>Bar over mid-foot, chest up, push the floor away, lockout with glutes—not low back.</i>	<b>3 x 5</b>	3:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Incline Dumbbell Press</b> <i>30–45 degree angle, dumbbells at shoulder level, press to full extension.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Pull-Ups (or Lat Pulldown)</b> <i>Full hang at bottom, pull until chin clears bar, control the negative. Use band for assistance if needed.</i>	<b>3 x 6–8</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Dumbbell Farmer Walk</b> <i>Heavy dumbbells at sides, shoulders packed down, walk with control—no waddling.</i>	<b>3 x 40yd</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Ab Wheel Rollout (or Kneeling)</b> <i>Start from knees, extend as far as you can with control, don't let hips sag.</i>	<b>3 x 8–10</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>
<b>Band Pull-Aparts</b> <i>Arms straight out, pull band apart to chest level, slow return. Posture work.</i>	<b>2 x 20</b>	0:45	<b>RPE 6</b>

PHASE 2 • WEEKS 5–8

## Strength Building

4 days per week (Mon / Tue / Thu / Fri). Upper/Lower split with increasing intensity and density training through supersets.

**4**

DAYS PER WEEK

**50**

MINUTES PER SESSION

**8**

TARGET RPE

**4**

WEEK DURATION

### PHASE 2 GOAL

Now we push. You've built the base—time to load it. Weights go up, rest stays honest, and we introduce supersets to increase training density. Your body is ready for this.

## Week-over-Week Progression (Phase 2)

- **Week 5:** Start with weights 5–10 lbs above your Phase 1 finishing weights for compounds. RPE 7–8.
- **Week 6:** Add 5 lbs to all compounds. Same reps. You should be at RPE 8 on the last sets.
- **Week 7:** Add 2.5–5 lbs again. If you miss reps, hold the weight and aim to complete all reps next week.
- **Week 8 (Deload):** Drop all weights by 40%. Same sets and reps but at RPE 5–6. Let your body recover and supercompensate. This is not laziness—it's strategy.

**Day A: Upper — Push / Pull**

Monday • ~50 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min rowing + band pull-aparts (15) + arm circles + 2 light sets of bench press

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Bench Press</b> <i>Arch upper back, drive feet into floor, bar path slightly diagonal from chest to lockout.</i>	<b>4 x 6</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Barbell Bent-Over Row</b> <i>Torso at 45 degrees, grip just outside knees, pull explosively to lower chest.</i>	<b>4 x 6</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Superset A1: Dumbbell Incline Press</b> <i>30-degree bench angle, touch dumbbells at top, 2-second negative.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	1:30 after both	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Superset A2: Cable Row (or DB Row)</b> <i>Chest up, squeeze for 1 second at contraction, control the return.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>		<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Superset B1: Lateral Raise</b> <i>Slight lean forward, lead with elbows, stop at shoulder height.</i>	<b>3 x 12</b>	1:00 after both	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Superset B2: Face Pulls</b> <i>High cable, rope attachment, pull to face and externally rotate.</i>	<b>3 x 15</b>		<b>RPE 7</b>

**Day B: Lower — Quad / Hamstring**

Tuesday • ~50 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min bike or walk + bodyweight squats (10) + hip circles + glute bridges (10) + 2 light sets of squats

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Back Squat</b> <i>Brace hard before descent, sit back and down, drive through full foot on the way up.</i>	<b>4 x 6</b>	3:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Romanian Deadlift (Barbell)</b> <i>Push hips back until you feel a deep hamstring stretch, then drive hips forward to stand.</i>	<b>4 x 8</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Dumbbell Bulgarian Split Squat</b> <i>Rear foot on bench, lower until front thigh is parallel, keep torso upright.</i>	<b>3 x 8/leg</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Leg Curl (Lying or Seated)</b> <i>Slow negative (3 seconds), full range, squeeze at peak contraction.</i>	<b>3 x 12</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Standing Calf Raise</b> <i>3-second pause at the top, full stretch at the bottom, don't bounce.</i>	<b>4 x 12</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Hanging Leg Raise (or Lying)</b> <i>Curl pelvis up, don't just swing legs. Slow and controlled throughout.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>

## Day C: Upper Strength

Thursday • ~55 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min rowing + band dislocates (10) + push-ups (10) + 2 light sets of overhead press

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Overhead Press</b>  <i>Squeeze glutes, brace core, press straight up and slightly back at lockout. No leg drive.</i>	<b>4 x 5</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Weighted Pull-Up (or Lat Pulldown)</b>  <i>Add weight via belt or dumbbell between feet. Full stretch, full contraction.</i>	<b>4 x 5</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Close-Grip Bench Press</b>  <i>Hands shoulder-width, elbows close to body, emphasize triceps at lockout.</i>	<b>3 x 8</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Superset A1: Barbell Curl</b>  <i>Strict form, no swinging. Full range, squeeze at top.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	1:00 after both	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Superset A2: Dumbbell Skull Crusher</b>  <i>Lower to forehead, elbows point to ceiling, extend to full lockout.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>		<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Rear Delt Fly (Dumbbell)</b>  <i>Bent over at hips, arms slightly bent, raise to sides, squeeze for 1 second.</i>	<b>3 x 15</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>

**Day D: Lower Strength + Conditioning**

Friday • ~55 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min jump rope or walk + hip circles + bodyweight lunges (8/leg) + 2 light sets of deadlift

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Conventional Deadlift</b> <i>Set back, chest up, big breath and brace, push floor away. Reset each rep.</i>	<b>4 x 5</b>	3:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Front Squat (or Goblet Squat)</b> <i>Elbows high, sit straight down between hips, stay upright through entire lift.</i>	<b>3 x 8</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Dumbbell Step-Up</b> <i>Full foot on bench, drive through the heel of the elevated foot, don't push off back foot.</i>	<b>3 x 10/leg</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Farmer Walk</b> <i>Heaviest dumbbells you can carry. Shoulders packed, core braced, walk with purpose.</i>	<b>3 x 50yd</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Conditioning Finisher: Dumbbell Complex</b> <i>5 RDLs + 5 Hang Cleans + 5 Front Squats + 5 Push Presses. No rest between exercises.</i>	<b>3 rounds</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 9</b>

PHASE 3 • WEEKS 9–12

# Peak Performance

4 days per week. Push/Pull/Legs + Full Body Power. Peak strength, body recomposition, and testing your personal records.

**4**

DAYS PER WEEK

**55**

MINUTES PER SESSION

**8–9**

TARGET RPE

**4**

WEEK DURATION

## PHASE 3 GOAL

This is where 12 weeks of work pays off. You'll test personal records in Week 12. Every rep from this point forward has a purpose. Bring your focus.

## Week-over-Week Progression (Phase 3)

- **Week 9:** Post-deload. You should feel recharged. Start 5 lbs above your Phase 2 peak. RPE 8.
- **Week 10:** Add 5 lbs to compounds. Reduce isolation reps by 1–2 if needed to maintain weight.
- **Week 11:** Heavy singles prep. Add 5 lbs again. Top sets should feel like RPE 9. This is the hardest week.
- **Week 12 (Test Week):** Test your 3-rep max on squat, bench, deadlift, and OHP. Then celebrate—you earned it.

**Day A: Push (Chest / Shoulders / Triceps)**

Monday • ~55 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min cardio + band pull-aparts (15) + arm circles + push-ups (10) + 2 light sets of bench press

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Bench Press</b> <i>Controlled descent, slight pause at chest, explosive press. This is your money lift.</i>	<b>4 x 4–5</b>	3:00	<b>RPE 8–9</b>
<b>Barbell Overhead Press</b> <i>Strict press, no leg drive. Full lockout, head pushes through at the top.</i>	<b>4 x 5</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8–9</b>
<b>Dumbbell Incline Press</b> <i>30-degree angle, full stretch at bottom, press and squeeze at top.</i>	<b>3 x 8</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Dips (Weighted if possible)</b> <i>Slight forward lean, lower until upper arms parallel to floor, press to lockout.</i>	<b>3 x 8–10</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Lateral Raise</b> <i>Slight bend in elbows, raise to shoulder height, 2-second negative.</i>	<b>3 x 12</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Tricep Rope Pushdown</b> <i>Elbows pinned, split the rope at the bottom, squeeze triceps hard.</i>	<b>3 x 12</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>

**Day B: Pull (Back / Biceps / Rear Delt)**

Tuesday • ~55 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min rowing + band pull-aparts (15) + cat-cow (8) + 2 light sets of barbell row

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Row (Pendlay or Bent-Over)</b> <i>Explosive pull from floor (Pendlay) or controlled from hang. Chest to bar.</i>	<b>4 x 5</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8-9</b>
<b>Weighted Pull-Up</b> <i>Dead hang start, pull chin over bar, 2-second negative on every rep.</i>	<b>4 x 4-6</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8-9</b>
<b>Single-Arm Dumbbell Row</b> <i>Knee and hand on bench, pull to hip, squeeze lat at the top for 1 second.</i>	<b>3 x 8/arm</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Barbell Curl</b> <i>Strict form. No momentum. Full range. 2-second negative.</i>	<b>3 x 8</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Hammer Curl</b> <i>Neutral grip, elbows at sides, build the brachialis for arm thickness.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Face Pull</b> <i>High cable, pull to face, externally rotate, hold for 1 second. Shoulder health essential.</i>	<b>3 x 15</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 7</b>

**Day C: Legs (Squat Focus + Accessories)**

Thursday • ~55 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min bike + bodyweight squats (10) + hip circles + ankle mobility + 2 light sets of squats

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Barbell Back Squat</b> <i>Big breath, brace hard, controlled descent, drive out of the hole. Own every rep.</i>	<b>4 x 4–5</b>	3:00	<b>RPE 8–9</b>
<b>Romanian Deadlift</b> <i>Hinge until you feel a deep hamstring stretch. Bar glued to legs. Drive hips through.</i>	<b>4 x 6</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Bulgarian Split Squat</b> <i>Dumbbells at sides, rear foot on bench, deep stretch on front leg, drive through heel.</i>	<b>3 x 8/leg</b>	1:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Leg Curl</b> <i>3-second negative, squeeze at peak, full range of motion.</i>	<b>3 x 10</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Standing Calf Raise</b> <i>Heavy. Pause at top and bottom for 2 seconds each. Build calves with time under tension.</i>	<b>4 x 10</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Weighted Plank</b> <i>Plate on back, elbows under shoulders, squeeze everything. Don't just survive —own it.</i>	<b>3 x 45s</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>

**Day D: Full Body Power**

Friday • ~60 min

**Warm-Up:** 5 min rowing + full mobility warm-up protocol + 2 light sets of deadlift

EXERCISE	SETS X REPS	REST	RPE
<b>Conventional Deadlift</b> <i>Reset every rep. Perfect position. This is the king of all lifts—treat it with respect.</i>	<b>4 x 3–4</b>	3:00	<b>RPE 9</b>
<b>Barbell Bench Press (Paused)</b> <i>2-second pause on chest. No bounce. Press explosively from the dead stop.</i>	<b>3 x 4</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8–9</b>
<b>Front Squat</b> <i>Elbows high, sit deep, stay upright. Builds quads and core stability.</i>	<b>3 x 6</b>	2:30	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Weighted Pull-Up</b> <i>Slow, controlled reps. Full stretch, full contraction. Quality over everything.</i>	<b>3 x 5</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 8</b>
<b>Farmer Walk (Heavy)</b> <i>Heaviest dumbbells in the gym. 60 yards. Grip, core, traps, everything works.</i>	<b>3 x 60yd</b>	2:00	<b>RPE 9</b>
<b>Ab Wheel Rollout</b> <i>From knees or standing (advanced). Full extension, control the return. No sagging hips.</i>	<b>3 x 8–10</b>	1:00	<b>RPE 8</b>

**WEEK 12 — TEST WEEK PROTOCOL**

In Week 12, replace Day A and Day D with testing sessions. Warm up thoroughly (more sets than usual at lighter weights). Work up to a heavy triple (3-rep max) on bench press (Day A) and deadlift (Day D). Test squat on Day C. Use Day B for lighter back work and recovery. Your 3-rep max is a

better indicator of true strength at 35+ than a risky 1-rep max. Record your numbers. Compare them to where you started. Be proud of the progress.

**FUEL**

# Nutrition Guidelines

You can't out-train a bad diet. Here's the simple framework that supports your training.

This is not a rigid meal plan. It's a set of principles. Follow them consistently and you'll fuel your training, build muscle, and lose body fat without obsessing over every calorie.

## The Big Rule: Protein First

Aim for **0.8–1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight** every single day. If you weigh 200 lbs, that's 160–200g of protein daily. This is the single most important nutrition habit for muscle growth and recovery.

If you can only change one thing about your diet, make it this.

## The Simple Meal Template

Every meal should follow this structure:

### Plate Layout

- 1 palm** of protein (chicken, beef, fish, eggs, Greek yogurt)
- 1 fist** of vegetables (any kind—the more color, the better)
- 1 cupped hand** of carbs (rice, potatoes, oats, fruit)
- 1 thumb** of fat (olive oil, avocado, nuts, butter)

Eat 3–4 meals per day following this template. That's it. No calorie counting required for most men following this program.

## Pre-Workout Nutrition

Eat a balanced meal **1.5–2 hours before training**. Something with protein and carbs. Examples:

- Chicken breast + rice + vegetables
- Greek yogurt + banana + handful of granola
- Eggs + toast + avocado

Don't train fasted if you want maximum performance. Your muscles need fuel.

## Post-Workout Nutrition

Eat within **1–2 hours after training**. Prioritize protein and carbs. This is when your body is primed to absorb nutrients and start the repair process.

- Protein shake + banana (quick option)
- Grilled chicken + sweet potato + greens
- Salmon + quinoa + roasted vegetables

## Hydration

Drink at minimum **half your bodyweight in ounces of water daily**. A 200-lb man should drink at least 100 oz of water per day. More on training days. If your urine isn't light yellow, you're not drinking enough.

## Supplement Recommendations

Most supplements are a waste of money. These five have solid research behind them and are worth the investment:

### 1. Creatine Monohydrate

**Dose:** 5g daily, every day (training or not). No loading phase needed.

**Why:** The most studied supplement in existence. Increases strength, power, and muscle mass. Cheap and effective.

[Shop Creatine on Amazon](#)

## 2. Vitamin D3

**Dose:** 2,000–5,000 IU daily with a meal containing fat.

**Why:** Most men are deficient. Supports testosterone production, bone health, immune function, and mood. Get your levels tested if possible.

## 3. Fish Oil (Omega-3)

**Dose:** 2–3g of combined EPA/DHA daily.

**Why:** Reduces inflammation, supports joint health (critical at 35+), and benefits heart and brain function.

## 4. Magnesium

**Dose:** 200–400mg daily (glycinate form is best, taken before bed).

**Why:** Supports sleep quality, muscle recovery, and stress management. Most men don't get enough from food alone.

## 5. Whey Protein Powder

**Dose:** 1–2 scoops (25–50g) as needed to hit your daily protein target.

**Why:** It's not magic—it's just convenient protein. Use it when whole food isn't practical.

**R E C O V E R**

## Recovery Protocol

Training breaks you down. Recovery builds you up. Ignore this section at your own risk.

At 35+, recovery is not optional. It's the difference between steady progress and chronic injuries. Your body can still build impressive strength and muscle—but it needs more intentional recovery than it did at 25. Accept this. Work with it.

## Sleep: The Non-Negotiable

**Minimum 7 hours. Aim for 8.** This is where growth hormone is released, muscles are repaired, and your nervous system resets. If you're sleeping 5–6 hours and wondering why you're not making progress, you have your answer.

- Same bed time and wake time every day (even weekends)
- No screens 30 minutes before bed
- Cool, dark room (65–68 degrees Fahrenheit)
- No caffeine after 2 PM
- Magnesium glycinate before bed can improve sleep quality

## Active Recovery Days

On non-training days, don't just sit on the couch. Light movement promotes blood flow and accelerates recovery:

- **20–30 minute walk** — The most underrated recovery tool. Walk outside if possible.
- **Light swimming or cycling** — Easy effort, 20–30 minutes. Zero impact on joints.
- **Foam rolling** — 10 minutes hitting quads, hamstrings, glutes, upper back, and lats.

- **Yoga or stretching — 15–20 minutes.** Focus on the mobility routine below.



### Foam Roller

Essential for myofascial release and recovery days.

[Shop on Amazon](#)

## Mobility Routine (10 Minutes)

Perform this on rest days, or after workouts. Hold each stretch for 30–45 seconds per side.

### 1. 90/90 Hip Stretch

Front leg at 90 degrees, back leg at 90 degrees. Sit tall and lean forward gently. Opens hip internal and external rotation. Critical for squats and deadlifts.

### 2. Doorway Chest Stretch

Arm on doorframe at 90 degrees, step through gently. Opens the pec and anterior shoulder. Combats desk posture and protects your bench press form.

### 3. World's Greatest Stretch

Lunge position, rotate torso toward front knee, reach arm to ceiling. Hits hip flexors, thoracic spine, hamstrings, and groin in one movement.

### 4. Wall Ankle Mobilization

Foot 4 inches from wall, drive knee over toes toward wall. If knee can't touch without heel lifting, you need this stretch. Better ankle mobility means better squats.

## 5. Hanging Dead Hang

Hang from pull-up bar with full bodyweight for 30–60 seconds. Decompresses spine, opens shoulders, builds grip endurance. Simple but powerful.

## 6. Couch Stretch (Hip Flexor)

Back knee against wall or couch, front foot forward in lunge. Squeeze back glute. Directly targets the hip flexors that tighten from sitting all day.

## When to Deload

A deload is a planned reduction in training volume or intensity. This program includes a built-in deload in Week 8. However, take an unscheduled deload if you experience:

- 2+ consecutive sessions where you miss prescribed reps at the same weight
- Joint pain that doesn't improve with warm-up
- Persistent fatigue despite adequate sleep
- Loss of motivation or dread about training (this is a real signal, not weakness)
- Getting sick more frequently than usual

**How to deload:** Drop all weights by 40–50%. Keep the same exercises, sets, and reps. Train at RPE 5–6 for one full week. Then resume your program where you left off.

## Signs of Overtraining

Know the difference between normal soreness and overtraining. Watch for these red flags:

- Elevated resting heart rate (5+ beats above normal in the morning)
- Persistent muscle soreness that lasts more than 72 hours

- Insomnia despite being exhausted
- Irritability, mood changes, or depression
- Decreased grip strength (one of the earliest indicators)
- Frequent illness or slow-healing minor injuries

If you notice 3+ of these symptoms, take a full week off. Not a deload—complete rest. Walk, stretch, sleep, eat. Come back stronger.

T R A C K

# Progress Tracking

What gets measured gets managed. What gets managed gets improved.

You need a log. Physical or digital—it doesn't matter. But you must write down every working set of every workout. The data doesn't lie, and it takes the guesswork out of progression.



## Workout Log Book

Pen and paper beats any app for simplicity and speed.

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## Weekly Tracking Template

Copy this format into your training log for each session:

EXERCISE	WEIGHT	SET 1	SET 2	SET 3	SET 4	NOTES
Barbell Bench Press	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barbell Row	—	—	—	—	—	—
Overhead Press	—	—	—	—	—	—
(exercise)	—	—	—	—	—	—
(exercise)	—	—	—	—	—	—

EXERCISE	WEIGHT	SET 1	SET 2	SET 3	SET 4	NOTES
(exercise)	—	—	—	—	—	—

Record the number of reps completed in each set column. For example: "8, 8, 7" means you hit 8, 8, and 7 reps across 3 sets.

## Monthly Measurement Checklist

Take these measurements on the 1st of each month, in the morning, before eating. Use a flexible tape measure.

- Bodyweight (same scale, same time, minimal clothing)
- Chest (at nipple line, relaxed)
- Waist (at navel, relaxed—don't suck in)
- Hips (at widest point)
- Arms (flexed, at the peak of the bicep)
- Thighs (at the widest point, relaxed)
- Progress photo — front, side, back (same lighting, same pose)

### COACH'S NOTE

Scale weight is just one data point and often a misleading one. If your waist is shrinking and your lifts are going up, you're recomping—losing fat and building muscle simultaneously. This is the gold standard for men over 35. Trust the measurements and the mirror over the number on the scale.

## The 2-for-2 Rule: When to Increase Weight

This is the simplest and most reliable progression method:

**If you can complete 2 extra reps beyond the prescribed reps on the last set for 2 consecutive workouts, increase the weight.**

Example: The program says 3x8 on bench press. If your last set goes 8, 8, 10 two weeks in a row, add 5 lbs to the bar next session.

- **Compound lifts (squat, bench, deadlift, OHP):** Add 5 lbs

- **Isolation lifts (curls, tricep work, lateral raises):** Add 2.5 lbs
- **If 2.5 lb plates aren't available:** Add a rep instead of weight

## What to Do If You Plateau

A plateau means you've been stuck at the same weight for 3+ weeks without hitting the 2-for-2 rule. Here's the protocol, in order:

- Check your recovery first.** Are you sleeping 7+ hours? Eating enough protein? Managing stress? Fix these before changing your training.
- Take a deload week.** Drop weight by 40%, same volume. Come back and try again. This works 80% of the time.
- Change the rep scheme.** If you're stuck at 3x8, try 5x5 at a slightly heavier weight. Different stimulus, same muscle.
- Add a set.** Go from 3 sets to 4 sets. More volume can drive adaptation.
- Swap the variation.** Stuck on flat bench? Switch to incline for 3 weeks, then come back to flat. You'll likely break through.

Plateaus are normal. They are not a sign of failure. They're a sign that your body has adapted—which means the program is working. You just need to nudge it forward.

## 12-Week Summary Tracker

Record your starting numbers (Week 1) and ending numbers (Week 12) here:

METRIC	WEEK 1	WEEK 4	WEEK 8	WEEK 12	CHANGE
Bench Press (3RM)	—	—	—	—	—
Squat (3RM)	—	—	—	—	—
Deadlift (3RM)	—	—	—	—	—
OHP (3RM)	—	—	—	—	—
Pull-Ups (max reps)	—	—	—	—	—
Bodyweight	—	—	—	—	—

METRIC	WEEK 1	WEEK 4	WEEK 8	WEEK 12	CHANGE
<b>Waist (inches)</b>	—	—	—	—	—

**NOW GO**

# What's Next

You have the plan. Here's how to keep the momentum going.

## After Week 12

Congratulations. You just completed a serious program. Here's what to do next:

- 1. Take a full deload week** after your Week 12 tests. You've earned it. Light movement, lots of sleep, good food.
- 2. Record your final numbers.** Compare them to Week 1. You'll be surprised how far you've come.
- 3. Decide your next goal.** Want to run it again with heavier starting weights? Focus on a specific lift? Cut body fat? The foundation is built—now you choose the direction.
- 4. Keep the habits.** The workouts are just 3–4 hours of your week. The sleep, nutrition, and recovery are 24/7. Those habits matter more than any program.

## Keep Learning

Visit [fitover35.com](http://fitover35.com) for new articles on training, nutrition, and recovery specifically for men over 35. We publish actionable content every week—no fluff, no fads, just what works.

## Recommended Gear

Here's the minimal equipment list that will serve you for years. Buy quality once.



### Adjustable Dumbbells

Replace an entire dumbbell rack. Essential for home



### Foam Roller

High-density for deep tissue work. Use on rest days.



### Resistance Bands

Warm-ups, mobility work, and travel training.

training.

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## Workout Log Book

Track every session. The data drives the progress.

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## Creatine Monohydrate

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# You Have Everything You Need.

The only thing left is to start.

Not tomorrow. Not Monday. Now. Open your calendar, block your training days, and commit to showing up. The program works—but only if you do.

12 weeks from now, you'll wish you started today.

This program is for educational purposes only. Consult your physician before beginning any exercise program.

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