

THE WELLNESS HUB DUBLIN

Beginner 4-Week Programme

Strength training for women after menopause

Designed by Kelley Connor · The Wellness Hub · Donaghmede, Dublin 13

4

WEEKS

3

SESSIONS / WEEK

45

MINS / SESSION

kelly@the-wellness-hub.ie · 086 210 6867 · the-wellness-hub.ie

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to use this programme

This programme is designed for women who are new to structured strength training, or returning after a break. It runs over four weeks with three sessions per week — each around 40–45 minutes including warm-up. No previous gym experience is needed.

Form over weight

Never increase the weight if your technique is slipping. Good form protects your joints and builds the neural pathways that make training safe long-term.

Progressive overload

Each week, you will add a small amount of weight or one extra rep. This is how the body adapts and grows stronger — gradually, safely.

Rest days matter

Muscle is built during recovery, not during the session. Keep at least one full rest day between sessions. Sleep 7–8 hours.

Track everything

Write down your weights — even in a notes app. Progress you cannot see is progress you will not repeat. A simple notebook works perfectly.

Eat protein after

Within 30–60 minutes of finishing, aim for 20–30g of protein. Greek yoghurt, eggs, a protein shake, chicken — whatever suits you.

Tell your instructor

If you have a joint issue, a recent injury, or any health condition, tell Kelley before your first session. She adapts every programme individually.

A note on menopause and strength

After menopause, oestrogen levels drop significantly — accelerating muscle loss (sarcopenia) and bone thinning (osteopenia). Resistance training is one of the most evidence-backed interventions available. Studies consistently show women who strength train 2-3 times per week maintain significantly higher bone density and muscle mass than those who do not. You are not too old. You are exactly the right age to start.

EVERY SESSION — WARM-UP (5-8 minutes)

MOVEMENT	DURATION	WHY
Light walking or marching on the spot	2 min	<i>Gets blood moving to muscles</i>
Hip circles	10 each direction	<i>Mobilises hip joint before squats and hinges</i>
Arm swings — forward and across body	10 each	<i>Opens shoulders and thoracic spine</i>

Bodyweight squats (slow)	10 reps	<i>Warms up knees, hips, and ankles</i>
Glute bridges (bodyweight)	10 reps	<i>Activates glutes before lower body work</i>
Cat-cow (on hands and knees)	8 slow	<i>Warms up the spine gently</i>

WEEK 1

Foundation

Learn the movements · light weight · build confidence

Do not be tempted to go heavy this week. The goal is movement quality. Choose a weight where the last 2 reps feel slightly challenging but form stays perfect. Rest fully between sets — 60-90 seconds minimum.

SESSION A — LOWER BODY FOCUS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Goblet Squat	3	10	90s	Hold dumbbell at chest. Feet shoulder-width. Sit back and down, chest tall.
Dumbbell Romanian Deadlift	3	10	90s	Hinge at hips, soft knees. Feel the hamstring stretch. Drive hips forward to stand.
Step-Ups (bodyweight or light hold)	3	8 each	60s	Full foot on step. Drive through heel. Control the descent.
Glute Bridge with Hold	3	12	60s	Hold at top for 2 seconds. Squeeze glutes fully. Keep ribs down.
Standing Calf Raise	2	15	45s	Slow and controlled. Use a wall for balance if needed.

SESSION B — UPPER BODY FOCUS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Chest Press (floor or bench)	3	10	90s	Elbows at 45 degrees, not flared. Control the descent — 2 counts down.
Seated Dumbbell Row	3	10 each	90s	Elbow drives back past the hip. Squeeze shoulder blade at top.
Overhead Press (seated or standing)	3	10	90s	Press in a slight arc in front of face. Core braced throughout.
Band or Cable Pull-Apart	3	12	45s	Arms straight, pull band apart at chest height. Control both directions.
Modified Push-Up (knees)	2	8–10	60s	Hands slightly wider than shoulders. Lower chest to floor. Build to toes over 4 weeks.

SESSION C — FULL BODY

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Squat to Press	3	8	90s	Squat, stand, press overhead in one fluid movement. Light weight this week.

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Single-Leg Romanian Deadlift (with support)	3	8 each	90s	<i>Hold onto a wall or chair. Focus on hip hinge. Pelvis level throughout.</i>
Seated Row (band or cable)	3	12	60s	<i>Pull elbows back past ribs. Pause and squeeze. 2 counts to return.</i>
Plank Hold	3	20s	45s	<i>Forearms or hands. Hips level — not sagging or raised. Breathe normally.</i>
Farmer Carry (light dumbbells)	3	20m walk	60s	<i>Shoulders back and down. Walk tall. Grip firm but not white-knuckle.</i>

This week's focus: technique

Record what weight you used on every exercise, even if it feels embarrassingly light. You will thank yourself in Week 3.

WEEK 2

Building

Add 0.5–1 kg on lower body · hold upper body weight

Increase lower body weights by a small amount — 0.5 to 1 kg. Keep upper body the same as Week 1 while form consolidates. If you cannot complete all reps with good form, drop back slightly — this is normal and right.

SESSION A — LOWER BODY FOCUS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Goblet Squat	3	12	90s	+0.5-1kg from Week 1. Depth improving — aim for thighs parallel.
Dumbbell Romanian Deadlift	3	12	90s	Slow the descent — 3 counts down. Feel the stretch more.
Step-Ups with Dumbbells	3	10 each	60s	Add light dumbbells if comfortable. Drive through heel, not toes.
Single-Leg Glute Bridge	3	10 each	60s	One foot elevated. Hold 2 seconds at top. Keep hips level.
Wall Sit	3	25s	60s	Thighs parallel, back flat on wall. Build towards 45s by Week 4.

SESSION B — UPPER BODY FOCUS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Chest Press	3	12	90s	Same weight as Week 1. Add 1 extra rep. Focus on full range.
Bent-Over Dumbbell Row	3	10 each	90s	Hinge at hips, flat back. Row to hip, not to shoulder.
Overhead Press	3	12	90s	Same weight. Wrists neutral. Slight forward lean acceptable.
Lateral Raise (light)	3	12	60s	New exercise — very light. Arms to shoulder height only. Control descent.
Modified Push-Up	2	10–12	60s	If comfortable, try 2 reps on toes, rest on knees to finish.

SESSION C — FULL BODY

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Squat to Press	3	10	90s	+0.5kg if Week 1 felt easy. Still focusing on fluidity.
Single-Leg RDL (no support)	3	8 each	90s	Try without support this week. Slight touch of toe acceptable for balance.

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Chest-Supported Row	3	12	60s	<i>Chest on incline bench or lean on knee. Eliminates lower back strain.</i>
Plank Hold	3	25s	45s	<i>+5 seconds from Week 1. Still breathing. Not holding breath.</i>
Farmer Carry	3	25m walk	60s	<i>Slightly heavier dumbbells. Walk smoothly — no waddling.</i>

This week's focus: range

Work on getting a little deeper in your squats and feeling the stretch more in your hinges. Depth comes before weight.

WEEK 3

Loading

Increase weight across all main lifts

This is the hardest week. Add weight to all major exercises. The last 2 reps of each set should require real effort. You may notice DOMS (delayed muscle soreness) 24–48 hours after — this is normal. Sleep and protein become especially important this week.

SESSION A — LOWER BODY FOCUS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Goblet Squat	4	10	90s	+1–2kg from Week 2. Four sets now — the extra set drives adaptation.
Dumbbell Romanian Deadlift	4	10	90s	Heavier weight. Slow (3-count) descent. Drive hips forward on way up.
Reverse Lunge	3	10 each	60s	Replaces step-ups. Step back, lower rear knee towards floor. Front heel stays down.
Hip Thrust (bench or floor)	3	12	60s	Shoulder blades on bench edge. Drive hips high. Barbell or dumbbell on hips optional.
Calf Raise — weighted	3	15	45s	Hold a dumbbell in each hand. Full range — full stretch at bottom, full rise at top.

SESSION B — UPPER BODY FOCUS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Chest Press	4	10	90s	Heavier than Week 2. Four sets. Do not let elbows flare.
Dumbbell Row (single arm)	4	10 each	90s	Knee on bench for support. Full range — feel the lat stretch at bottom.
Seated Overhead Press	3	10	90s	Seated removes lower back load. Heavier than previous weeks.
Face Pull (band)	3	15	45s	Band at face height. Pull to ears, thumbs behind. External rotator health.
Push-Up (attempt toes)	3	8–10	60s	Aim for all reps on toes. Drop to knees for last 2 if needed. Honest count.

SESSION C — FULL BODY

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Deadlift (conventional)	4	8	90s	<i>Two dumbbells outside feet. Flat back. Hips and shoulders rise at same rate.</i>
Goblet Squat Pulse	3	12 + 4 pulses	90s	<i>Normal goblet squat, then 4 small pulses at the bottom. Burns. Works.</i>
Push-Press	3	8	90s	<i>Slight dip at knees to generate drive. Press overhead explosively. Control descent.</i>
Plank — full (toes)	3	30s	45s	<i>Or max time with good form. No hips dropping. Squeeze everything.</i>
Farmer Carry — heavy	3	20m walk	90s	<i>Heaviest so far. Shoulders back, chin level. Test your grip.</i>

This week's focus: effort

The last 2 reps of every set should require genuine effort. If they feel easy, the weight is too light. If form breaks down, the weight is too heavy.

WEEK 4

Consolidation

Repeat Week 3 weight · perfect form · test 1 rep max (optional)

Hold Week 3 weights. The goal this week is performance quality — every rep cleaner than last week. Optionally, on your final Session A, test your goblet squat with a heavier weight for 1-3 reps to see how far you have come. This is your baseline for the next programme block.

SESSION A — LOWER BODY + OPTIONAL TEST

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Goblet Squat (warm-up sets)	2	6	60s	<i>Lighter. Perfect depth and bracing. Prepare joints for heavier sets.</i>
Goblet Squat (working sets)	3	10	90s	<i>Week 3 weight. Optional: final set — add weight, do 3 reps as a test.</i>
Dumbbell Romanian Deadlift	4	10	90s	<i>Week 3 weight. Four sets. Slow and controlled throughout.</i>
Reverse Lunge	3	12 each	60s	<i>2 extra reps vs Week 3. Same weight.</i>
Hip Thrust	3	15	60s	<i>+3 reps vs Week 3. Squeeze hard at top. 2-second hold.</i>

SESSION B — UPPER BODY

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Chest Press	4	12	90s	<i>Week 3 weight, 2 extra reps. Should feel more controlled than Week 3.</i>
Dumbbell Row (single arm)	4	12 each	90s	<i>2 extra reps. Full range of motion. No shrugging.</i>
Overhead Press	4	10	90s	<i>Four sets (was 3). Same weight as Week 3. Core stays braced.</i>
Lateral Raise	3	15	60s	<i>+3 reps. Still controlled descent. No swinging.</i>
Push-Up (toes)	3	10–12	60s	<i>Full toes if possible. This is your baseline for future programming.</i>

SESSION C — FULL BODY + CELEBRATE

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Dumbbell Deadlift	4	10	90s	<i>+2 reps vs Week 3. Smooth hip hinge. Proud of how far you have come.</i>

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	COACHING NOTE
Goblet Squat Superset with Shoulder Press	3	10 + 10	90s	<i>No rest between squat and press. Then 90s rest. Metabolic conditioning.</i>
Bent-Over Row	4	12 each	90s	<i>Back to bent-over version. Compare to your first Session B — note the difference.</i>
Plank — max hold	1	Max	-	<i>One set, maximum effort. Note the time. Your benchmark for next block.</i>
Farmer Carry — test weight	2	30m walk	90s	<i>Heaviest you can manage with good posture. Your grip has improved — trust it.</i>

Well done — you finished.

Your body is different from four weeks ago. More muscle. Stronger bones. Better posture. Take a rest week, then consider the next block with Kelley at the Hub.

WHAT COMES NEXT

You've built the foundation. Now we build on it.

After four weeks of consistent training, your body has adapted to the basic movement patterns. You can squat, hinge, push, and pull with confidence. The next phase involves heavier loads, more variety, and the beginning of real strength milestones — things like a bodyweight goblet squat, full push-ups from toes, and carrying meaningful weight for distance.

Join Ladies Who Lift (LWL)

Kelley's small group strength programme runs in 8-week blocks with clear weekly progressions and technique coaching. This guide was designed as a bridge to LWL. Enquire to join the next block.

Book a Nutrition 1:1

If your energy, sleep, or body composition is not where you want it, a single consultation with Kelley often unlocks what training alone cannot. Food and strength work together.

Try Pilates alongside strength

Sara Connor's Pilates programme builds the deep core and postural strength that makes your lifting safer and more effective. Many members train strength Mon/Wed/Fri and Pilates on Saturday.

GET IN TOUCH

kelley@the-wellness-hub.ie

086 210 6867 · 123a Carndonagh Park, Donaghmede, Dublin 13 · the-wellness-hub.ie

Information in this guide is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. If you have any health conditions or concerns, consult your GP before starting a new exercise programme. © 2026 The Wellness Hub Dublin. All rights reserved.