Pace Yourself

Build strength at your own speed—and without those backbreaking weights.

October 1, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

Few would discount the physical and mental benefits of exercise. But HIV can present barriers—including plain old fatigue—to hitting the gym. The virus can also raise your risk for heart disease, bone thinning and diabetes, so finding some way to work out is critical. Even if you can't manage high-octane cardio and pumping, you can try these three great muscle-strengthening exercises. The moves, adapted from *Age-Defying Fitness*, by Marilyn Moffat and Carole B. Lewis (Peachtree, $19.95), use light hand weights, resistance bands (see "Rock Bands," below) and your own body weight to whip you into shape.

Overhead lifts (two sets of 8–12 reps)
Sit in a supportive, armless chair, keeping your stomach and chin tucked in to align your back and neck. Position the middle of the resistance band under your butt; hold one end in each hand (or hold light weights, one in each hand). Bend elbows and raise arms to about shoulder height. Keep your palms facing forward, elbows pointing down and out. Breathe in.

As you exhale, contract abdominal muscles, straighten arms and slowly raise them overhead. Bend elbows and slowly lower arms to starting position as you breathe in.

Wall slides (3 reps)
Stand 18 to 24 inches away from a wall with arms at your side and feet approximately shoulder-width apart. Tighten stomach muscles and tuck chin so that your back is straight.

Steadily breathing out, bend knees, lean upper back against the wall and slide slowly down into a sitting position, knees at 90 degrees, back still against the wall. Hold for 10 seconds; build to 60.

Slowly straighten your knees as you breathe in, sliding up the wall and back into starting position.

Trunk extensions (build to 10 reps)
Lie facedown on the floor with a small pillow under your stomach, arms stretched out in front, close to your ears. Rest your forehead directly on the floor or on a small rolled towel. Keep stomach muscles contracted and chin tucked in throughout the exercise.

Breathing in, raise your right arm and left leg simultaneously about 1 inch off the floor; keep them

straight. Smoothly stretch them as if someone were pulling your arm forward and your leg backward. Hold for 6 to 10 seconds, breathing in and out gently.

Exhaling, return to the starting position. Repeat the exercise using the opposite side arm and leg.

Rock bands

Try adding resistance bands to your workouts and reap the benefits. Resistance bands are elastic banding or tubes about 4 feet long that exert tension as you move. They’re available at sporting goods stores for about $5 to $25.

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