Strength training is a way to build muscles and strength using free weights, weight machines, rubber resistance bands, and body weight. Kids and teens can use strength training to improve sports performance, treat/prevent injuries, and to stay healthy.

Strength training can help improve your Baseball or Softball performance immensely. Here are some strength exercises to improve your performance on the diamond:

- Improves hitting power
- Increases arm strength and arm speed
- Helps improve your running speed
- Improves overall fitness and sports performance
- Increases lean body mass (more muscle, less fat)
- Helps burn more calories and increase your metabolism
- Makes bones stronger

Kids can safely do strength training if they have good balance and control of their body, follow instructions carefully, and can do the exercises with good form. In general, kids and teens should tone their muscles using light weights (or resistance) and a high number of repetitions rather than lifting a heavy load once or twice. The amount of weight will depend on a child’s age, size, and strength level. But in general, kids should be able to lift a weight with proper technique at least 8 to 15 times. If they can’t lift the weight comfortably at least 8 times, the weight is too heavy.
HEALTH TIP OF THE WEEK

STAIR PUSH-UPS

Push-ups are a great way to help improve upper body strength. This exercise will help improve your throwing velocity and hitting power. Push-ups are beneficial for working on triceps, pectoral muscles, and shoulders.

To do Stair Push-Ups:

1. Find some stairs at home and stand in front of them with your legs shoulder width apart.

2. Reach forward until you are holding onto the corner of a step. Arms should be slightly wider than your shoulders. This is your push up position!

3. Bend your elbows to lower your whole body towards the stairs, just like a push up.

4. Straighten your arms until you are back at the top of your push up position.

Repeat for 10-15 reps. Take a break in between sets and do 3-5 sets for a great upper body workout. To make the workout harder, pick a step closer to the ground to do your push-ups.
HEALTH TIP OF THE WEEK

Here are some fun leg strength exercises that will help take your game to the next level:

**SQUATS**

Squats are a great exercise to help strengthen your quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteus maximus, and lower legs when done properly. It’s also great to help improve your hitting power and running speed.

To do a basic squat:

1. Start with your feet slightly wider than hip-width apart.
2. Keep your chest up and shift your weight onto your heels as you push your hips back into a sitting position.
3. Lower your hips until your thighs are close to parallel to the floor. You should feel the squat in your thighs and glutes.
4. Pause with your knees over, but not beyond, your toes.
5. Exhale and push back up to the starting position.

It’s important to maintain good form when doing squats to prevent injuries, so work on form with body weight squats and incorporate weight only when you have your form down. To prevent over-use injuries, do 3-5 sets of 8-10 reps with a 2 to 3-minute rest in between sets. Fill free to increase rest time if you are feeling fatigued early on.
Triceps dips are a great non-equipment and body weight exercise to help strengthen your triceps muscles and shoulder strength. This simple exercise can be done almost anywhere and has many variations to match your fitness level.

**To do Triceps Dips:**

1. Sit on the edge of the chair and grip the edge next to your hips. Your fingers should be pointed at your feet.

2. Extended your legs straight and make sure your feet are about hip-width apart with the heels touching the ground. Look straight ahead with your chin up.

3. Lower yourself until your elbows are bent close to a 90-degree angle.

4. Slowly push yourself back up to the start position and repeat.

Repeat this exercise for 10-20 reps and make sure to take a break in between sets. 3-5 sets are ideal to optimize your workout.
Lunges are also a great leg exercise to help improve hitting power and running speed. This exercise isolates your quadriceps and hamstrings which are essential muscles for baseball and softball players.

To do a basic squat:

1. Start by standing up tall.
2. Step forward with one foot until your leg reaches a 90-degree angle. Your rear knee should remain parallel to the ground and your front knee shouldn’t go beyond your toes.
3. Lift your front lunging leg to return to the starting position.

Make sure your knee does not move forward past 90-degrees to prevent injuries to your knees and joints. A great way to incorporate it into your workout is to do 3-5 sets of 8-15 sets. Before adding weight, make sure to work on perfecting the lunge form without any weights to prevent over-use fatigue and injuries.
Band pull-apart are an isolation exercise designed to target muscle groups in your shoulders and upper back. These muscle groups are essential for throwing faster and hitting power in both baseball and softball.

**To do a Band Pull Apart:**

1. First you hold a resistance band with a shoulder-width grip.
2. Keep your arms straight as you pull the resistance band laterally, extending both arms to either side.
3. Return to your initial position slow and in control to prevent the band from snapping.

Repeat this exercise for 10-20 reps. Make sure to rest in between sets and keep the sets at 3-5 times to prevent over-use fatigue and injuries.