POLE
POWER

A Strength-Building Program for Pole Dancers
I have been asked many times: "How to I build more strength for pole dancing? What exercises can I do to get a stronger grip or hold myself up better on the pole? The strength-building exercise program in this eBook is for both beginning as well as those seasoned pole dancers.

**Building your strength pays off when learning, practicing and performing pole tricks!**

This eBook will show you how to:

- improve your grip
- develop forearm strength and flexibility
- increase rotator cuff strength - the most commonly injured part of a pole dancer's body
- develop leg strength for gripping
- joint flexibility and how to effectively increase your range of motion
- the best exercises for core strength
- rotational core strength
- exercises to help you hold yourself effortlessly on the pole
- exercises to help hold yourself in inverted trick positions
- a cardio plan to help lower your body fat from ugly rolls to sexy ripped!
- incorporate a list of power foods into your diet
- and much more!

You can perform those amazing pole tricks by increasing your strength strategically with these exercises!
Improving Your Grip and Strengthening Your Forearms

Hand Squeezes: Use a fitness hand grip to strengthen the whole hand and forearm. Squeeze the grip closed; hold for a few seconds and then let it go gradually. Control is what gives you strength here. Do as many reps as you can with each hand.

Hang from a chin-up bar: Grab a chin up bar with both hands in an overhand grip and hold yourself with legs bent behind you as long as you can. Try again with an underhand grip.

Hang from a chin up bar with a towel: Use a thick, long towel rolled up and draped over a chin up bar. Grasp the towel ends as far up as you can and hang like you are going to do a pull-up. Your hands are gripping something thicker than the pull-up bar so this is working your grip strength in a different way.

Wrist curls: Use a dumbbell in one hand, resting on your knee as you are seated. Hold the dumbbell with the end straight up. Flex your wrist towards yourself and then back down towards the floor. Use control in this exercise. You can increase the weight as your wrists get stronger.

Plate Hold: Using a pinch-type of grip, pick up a heavy weight plate with one hand and hold it as long as you can. As your strength increases, try a heavier plate.

Towel dumbbell: Wrap a rolled towel around the bar of a dumbbell. Grasp both ends of the towel and pick the dumbbell up in a hammer curl fashion – as if you were holding a sack of potatoes by one hand.

Forearm curls: Hold a dumbbell in one hand with palm facing down, resting on your leg/knee. Flex your hand up towards yourself and back down again. Use control in this exercise.

Reverse forearm curl: Hold a dumbbell in one hand with palm facing up. Curl the dumbbell towards you and release slowly back to starting position. Do as many reps as you can and increase the weight incrementally as your arms become stronger.

Use a yoga or exercise mat for the following stretch:

Forearm stretch: Get on your hands and knees on the floor, the tops your hands flat on the floor, fingers facing towards you and hands in line underneath your
shoulders. Rock gently back and forth the weight of your body helping to create the stretch in your forearms.

Finger Pulls: Put one arm straight out in front of you, palm facing the wall in front of you, fingers pointed towards the ceiling. With your other hand, gently pull the tops of your fingers towards you until you feel a good stretch. Hold for a few seconds, release and try and pull the fingers towards you again just a little farther.

Place your arm out in front of you again, palm facing out to the wall in front of you, fingers pointed down towards the floor. With your other hand, pull the fingers gently down and towards your body until you feel the stretch. Hold, release and repeat, trying to pull a little farther.

**Leg Grip Exercises**

Cross Ankle Release Crunch: Get into the Cross Ankle Release position (or Cross Knee Release) by squeezing your thighs hard together on the pole and crossing your ankles. If you cannot get into or hold this position yet, you can do this from the floor. Hold yourself on the pole, using your abdominal muscles pull yourself up into a sitting position. Try doing this with your hands at your sides or behind your head. If you cannot do this yet, reach forward with your arms to give you extra leverage crunching up.

This exercise also works your core muscles but helps to develop your leg grip as you are moving your body while holding on only with your thighs.

Knee Holds: Stand with the pole at your left side. Lift your left leg up and in front of the pole. With the pole behind your knee, bend your leg until you are holding the pole with your leg. Grasp the pole with both hands at shoulder height and lift your right leg, knee bent and place it on the pole, the pole just below the knee cap. Touch both of your feet together and hold this position. Repeat with the right leg holding the pole.

When you can hold the position described above, try letting go of the pole with your hands and holding on only with your legs.
Rotational Core Strength

Lying hip swing: Lie on your back on a towel or yoga mat with your legs pointed straight up at the ceiling and your arms extended out for balance. Keeping your legs straight and together, swing them all the way to the left. Right before your feet touch the floor, swing them to the right. Do as many reps as you can while keeping good form.

Core Strength Exercises

Pole Floor Pilates: Lie on the floor on a yoga mat with the pole a few inches from the top of your head. Grasping the pole overhead, arms bent at the elbows, point your toes, legs together, and using your abdominal muscles (not your arms) pull your legs up and aim your toes to touch the pole as high as they can. Squeeze your abs and release your legs SLOWLY back down. Just before your feet touch the floor, aim the toes to the top of the pole and lift your legs up again. Do as many as you can in 5 minutes.

Pole Crunches: Stand beside the pole with your left hip touching the pole. Grasp the pole with both hands at shoulder height. Pull yourself up a bit and with your toes and knees together, using your abs, bring your knees as far to your chest as possible in a crunch. Release slowly and before your feet touch the floor, bring your knees back up again. Do as many as you can in 5 minutes.

Shoulder Mount Crunch: Stand with the pole at your back and between your neck and shoulder. Raise both arms overhead and grasp the pole in a cupping grip. Pulling the pole into your shoulder and keeping your feet and knees together, use your abs to bring your knees to your chest in a crunch position. Release slowly and before your feet touch the floor, crunch up again. Do as many as you can in 5 minutes.

Increase your time/reps as you become stronger and these exercises become easier.
How to Increase Range of Motion

The best way to increase your flexibility and range of motion for a movement is to hold the stretch just to the point of mild discomfort. Here the joint, tendons and muscles are being stretched just a tad beyond their normal range and the next time you go to stretch this range will not be so uncomfortable.

Do not stretch to the point of pain or severe discomfort; just to the point where it is mildly uncomfortable and you naturally want to get out of the stretch. This is how doing the splits is accomplished. You keep stretching further and further each time and within as little as six weeks you can do the full front-splits.

Exercises to Help Climb the Pole

Pole Ups: Stand in front of the pole. Grasp with both hands at your forehead level. Engage your back muscles and pull yourself up, knees bent up behind you as if pulling up on a pull-up bar. Hold as long as you can and release yourself with control. This movement may only be small at first but as you become stronger, you can hold yourself longer and reach higher to pull yourself up as in a pull-up.

Climbing: Do pole climbs, starting your climbs out with both arms and both feet. For example, if you start your climbs with your right arm and right foot, then practice alternating your start with your left arm and foot.

Sit Pull-Ups: Get into sitting position on the pole. Reach up with your arms and grasp the pole. Let go with legs briefly while using your arms only to pull you up into a higher sit. Here you are using your arms only to climb. Increase the number of times that you can keep pulling yourself up in this way.

Exercises to help Hold Yourself in Inverted Positions

Push up with legs on wall/table: Get near a wall or table where you can place your feet on it above your head. Place both hands flat on the floor about 2-3 feet away from the wall. You may need to experiment to find out how far away you need to place your hands from the wall. Put your feet up on the wall until your weight is resting on your hands. Slowly bend your arms in a push-up and
straighten. You may only be able to go a few inches at first but keep practicing until you can do a full-pull up.

Push up with feet on pole: The same as the exercise above except your feet and legs are grasping the pole in between them.

Climb the pole upside down from floor: Place your hands on the floor about 2 feet away from the pole. Lift your legs and grasp the pole behind you. When you have a secure grip on the pole with your legs, lift your hands to grasp the pole in front of you. Push yourself up into an upside-down sit position. Without letting go of the pole with your legs, slide them until they are straightened up higher on the pole. Again, when your grip with your legs is secure, slide your hands higher to grip the pole right in front of you. This is the Caterpillar move and you are practicing your grip with both your hands and legs.

Rotator Cuff Exercise

The rotator cuff is a series of muscles that stabilize the shoulder so the purpose of this exercise is to strengthen these muscles, not make them larger so that is the reason for the use of the light weights.

Dumbbell Shoulder exercises: Lie face down on a weight bench and use a light weight, such as a 5 lb. or 3 lb. in each hand if you have not been exercising regularly. Palms should be facing down. Keep your head in line with your spine. Squeezing your shoulder blades together, lift your arms straight out at your sides. Hold this position for a moment, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Move your arms in an arc straight overhead and then all the way back down to the sides of your body. Release slowly to rest without rounding your shoulders forward. Repeat.

Stand with a dumbbell in one hand and the other arm resting at your side. Keeping your elbow close at your waist so your joints are in line (arm should be at a 90 degree angle), holding the dumbbell with your thumb facing up, rotate your lower arm out (keeping your elbow right at your waist) and all the way back to where the dumbbell is at your stomach. Do not rotate your arm out beyond the point where your hand is straight in line with your body.

Only do 10-15 reps max of these exercises as the idea is to strengthen the muscles, not fatigue them.
The secret ingredient to workouts that most women shy away from

Body-building. Weight lifting. Strength training. Whatever you want to call it. As long as it involves you lifting something heavy enough to continually challenge your muscles - it counts. Lifting a weight, whether it is a dumbbell, barbell, sandbag or your own bodyweight, is strength training.

What we tend to forget is that muscle helps us burn calories and fat. The more muscle you pack on, the lower your body-fat will go and the sleeker your body will look and the stronger you will be.

Three tips for beginning your weight-training regimen:
1. Use a barbell. You can use dumbbells, but using a barbell immediately encourages you to...
2. Lift heavier. Don’t use the 5 lb. or 10 lb. weights because you are afraid of getting bulky. Check out Rachel McLish if you want some inspiration for weight lifting. Talk about lean, mean and beautiful curves, no bulk!
3. Focus on working your chest, back, biceps and triceps. These are the muscles that the men usually try and develop and show off. Well, we can develop and carve out our arms since they are going to help us on the pole!

The Total Basic Body-Strengthening Workout

I am going to outline a simple weight lifting workout that is simple enough for anyone to do, the exercises are easy to remember but it is hard enough to be effective!

You will perform this workout **3 days a week** and the *entire* workout will take no more than **30 minutes**. You will alternate the upper and lower body workouts; for example you would start off your week on Monday doing your upper body exercises, Wednesday lower body exercises and Friday upper body again (You will be doing your cardio workout on the days in between).

So alternate days, alternate upper and lower body exercises. This helps you with being able to concentrate on the exercises only for that day and really build your muscles.

**Tips for lifting weights:**

- A set of dumbbells is all you need to do these exercises but you can also include a barbell with removable plates for better results. I like using a barbell as well because it forces me to keep good form when doing overhead lifting or bicep curls. I can also lift heavier which is important in this workout.
- Choose a weight to start out with that you can perform 8 repetitions with and to perform 12 repetitions is difficult. You don’t want to choose a weight that is too light; for some, a 5 lb. dumbbell will be hard to lift 12 repetitions at; for others, it may take 20 or 25 lbs. IF you have been doing some bodybuilding previously, maybe a 40 lb. weight will suit you. Just follow my rule of thumb above.
- Lift slowly and lower slowly. You don’t want to swing the weight. Say slowly "I am sexy" lifting the weight and "I am sexy and strong" lowering the weight. This helps to slow you down as well as give you some positive self-talk! Performing the exercises with control help to engage all of the muscle fibers.
Use good form. Keep your center strong, your posture long and perform the exercises in a mirror if possible so that you can see if you are performing them correctly. No swinging the weights, no slouched shoulders; abs strong and tight, breathe through your stomach and keep your feet planted (if a standing position).

Upper Body Exercises

This set of upper body exercises can be performed at home using your own dumbbells and/or barbell or at a gym with free weights. I always prefer to use free weights because I feel that they work your body harder. Using a machine only engages certain muscles because the machine in some ways is helping you to keep form and may not force you to engage other muscles while performing the exercise like free weights do.

Remember; perform these exercises on alternate days from the lower body and cardio workouts!

Back

Dumbbell Rows: Kneeling on a weight bench with one leg or bending over while keeping your back straight and center strong, hold a dumbbell in each hand, extending the arms down towards the floor then pull your arms up and back in one rowing motion imagining your shoulder blades squeezing together.

Chest

Barbell or dumbbell press: Laying on your back on a weight bench or on a flat surface, hold a dumbbell in each hand (or a barbell with both) at chest level; extend your arms straight up in a smooth motion. Lower back down to your chest. You can reposition your hand placement moving them in closer together or farther apart to work different muscles of the chest.

Dumbbell Flyes: Lying on your back on a weight bench or flat surface, hold a dumbbell in each hand and extend arms straight up. Lower them slowly out at your sides until just lower than your chest. Return to starting position slowly.

Biceps

Bicep Curls: Holding a dumbbell in each hand with palms facing out away from you, slowly curl your arms until the dumbbells are near your shoulders. Lower to starting position.
**Barbell Curl:** Do the same exercise as above while holding the barbell.

**Triceps**

**Tricep Kickbacks:** Lean forward and rest your right knee and hand on a bench or flat surface. Holding the dumbbell in your left hand, point your elbow as high as you can to the ceiling. Without changing the position of your elbow, extend your arm back until it is straight. Return slowly to the starting position. Repeat on your left side as well.

**Overhead Triceps Extension:** Holding a dumbbell in each hand bend your elbows and place them near the sides of your head. Keeping your elbows in position, slowly extend your arms straight overhead. Return to starting position.

**Lower Body Exercises**

**Quads**

**Squats:** Holding a barbell across the back of your shoulders or two dumbbells at your sides with your arms hanging down, without allowing your knees to go past your toes, keeping your back straight and feet flat, slowly bend your knees into a squat position. Slowly return to starting position.

**Hamstrings**

**Lunges:** Holding a dumbbell in each hand with your arms hanging down at your sides, step forward with one leg in a deep lunge forward. Do not let your knee go beyond your toes. Push back up to starting position.

**Calves**

**Calf Raises:** Standing with your feet shoulder with apart and a dumbbell in each hand (arms down at your sides) or a barbell across the back of your shoulders, raise up on your toes engaging your calf muscles. Squeeze them a little extra hard while in the raised position and then slowly lower until your feet are flat again. Repeat.

**Abs**

**Crunches:** Lying on your back on the floor, your shoulders slightly up off of the floor and your hands touching your ears lightly (not holding your head!) bend your knees and bring them up off the floor. While in this semi-curled position, breathe out and contract your abdominals bringing your knees as closely as
possible towards your chest. Return to starting position without letting your feet touch the floor.

*Elbow to Knee Crunches*: In the same position as above in the Crunch, while contracting your abs, bring your right elbow to your left knee return to starting position; take your left elbow and try and touch your right knee. Keep doing over and over.

**Bodyweight exercises for strength training**

If you don't have a set of dumbbells yet or are somewhere where you don't have access to a gym, there are a number of bodyweight exercises that you can do that will serve as strength training exercises. The resistance will come from your own bodyweight as opposed to weights.

For your upper body you can perform **pull ups** (at a park nearby or with a portable bar that installs in a doorframe) or **push ups** - military style or on your knees. Keep your back straight and the top of your head as if it were touching a wall lightly. This keeps your spine in alignment and ensures that you are not over arching your neck. Place your hands right under your shoulders and push up. You can re-position your hands closer and farther apart as you become stronger to work different chest muscles.

**Triceps Dip**: Place hands behind you on a low sturdy surface and keeping your core strong and back straight; lower your hips as far down as you can keeping your arms at your sides and bending your elbows backwards. Without using your legs, push yourself up to the starting position.

**Sit up or crunches** - most ab work is done without any machinery or weights.

**Squats and Lunges** - you can do these with your hands on your hips and do as many as you can to failure - until you can't do one more!

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You don't have to live on the treadmill to look like this!

The best thing I have found in my research and experimentation with myself and others while training them is that you don't have to do hours of cardio...anything more than 30 minutes is too much and can actually be
Research has proved over and over again that 20 to 30 minutes of intense, conscious, muscle-engaging cardiovascular exercise is much more effective than an hour of non-intense, stay in your heart-target--rate area exercise that doesn't push your body to become more efficient at burning fat and exercising harder!

This is called working out smarter and harder! If you are used to doing an hour a day on the treadmill or cycle or walking, that's fine. But we are going to change that up to see some real results in your body. You are going to start doing your 30-minute intense cardio sessions on the days that you aren't doing your weight workout. So your schedule for the week will look something like this:

- **Monday:** Upper Body Exercises
- **Tuesday:** Cardio
- **Wednesday:** Lower Body Exercises
- **Thursday:** Cardio
- **Friday:** Upper Body Exercises
- **Saturday:** Cardio
- **Sunday:** Free Time!
- **Monday:** Lower Body Exercises
- **Tuesday:** Cardio
- **Wednesday:** Upper Body Exercises

...and so on. This way, you are constantly working your entire body and not overworking any one area. Take one day off during your week too to eat and do whatever you would like!

Cardio exercise includes any movement that will get your heart rate up and keep it up including running (the best and my choice), walking, cycling, inline skating, dancing, any of the cardio gym machines like elliptical trainers, cardio kick boxing and many others.

When you do your cardio session, you want to plan it so that you are working out intensely for your 30 minutes - a short, hard workout. Start off by doing a 5
minute warm up to get your muscles warmed and ready for action. Then, for the next five minutes, kick it up a notch; this is pushing beyond the warm up, kick-back cruise on the treadmill stage. Every five minutes kick it up another notch but take a 30 second kick-it-down a notch in between those intervals.

So your workout will look something like this:

3 minutes:       Warm up
5 minutes:       Kick it up one level. We will call this Level 1
30 seconds:   Let it down to warm-up level
5 minutes:       Kick it up one more notch to Level 2
30 seconds:   Warm up level for 30 seconds
5 minutes:       Kick it up to Level 3
30 seconds:   Warm up level for 30 seconds
5 minutes:       Kick it up to Level 4
30 seconds:   Warm up level for 30 seconds
3 minutes:        Kick it up to all-you’ve-got Level 5
2 minutes:   Cool down.

Remember, after an intense exercise, your metabolism levels are raised and keep the fires burning for several hours afterwards. Exercising in this intense interval style will develop your body’s efficiency to exercise more easily at more intense levels which means you are becoming fitter, faster, leaner, stronger and SEXIER!

A word about the levels above: Only you can determine, in an honest manner, what a warm up level means for you. Carrying a bag of groceries might be a warm up for you or it may be a harder, breath-taking exercise if you have not worked out in a long time. So, I leave the intensity up to the individual. A rule of thumb is that you can have an easy conversation at the warm up level, a little breathy trying to talk at Level 3 and cannot converse at Level 5. This is your maximum effort here; I mean all out which is why it is only 3 minutes. And you may not be able to do a Level 5 intensity for 3 minutes at first. You may have to work up to it. But complete the 30 minute session no matter what.

Stick to your schedule, even if you miss a workout here and there, a little is better than nothing and the rewards will come quickly. You will start to stop by the mirror a little longer; you will start noticing curves in our arms and shoulders and your waist slimming down, your hips smaller. It is worth it! As the saying goes...Nothing taste as good as looking good! Which is what out next topic is about...
Stripping off the pounds...!

A word about weight loss and fat loss...there is a difference!

Losing weight can be good or bad...good if it is mostly fat that you are losing. Bad if it is water or lean muscle which is what can happen when we starve ourselves on crash diets, eat too little and not exercise!

Fat loss is an entirely different and healthy approach to losing those unwanted pounds. By performing muscle-building exercises like lifting weights, eating enough lean protein and good carbs and doing intense cardio sessions that keep the fat-burning metabolism fires stoked for hours, you will shed fat and not your precious muscle or water that your body needs to not only survive but to also look healthy, lean and toned!

A healthy meal is made up of protein, carbohydrates and fat. Good, healthy fats that come naturally in fish like salmon, veggies like avocados and a little virgin olive oil drizzled over your salads. Proteins are chicken, fish, lean beef or tofu. Carbohydrates are steamed brown rice, steamed veggies or whole wheat bread.

Here I will give a list of good staples of make your meals out of. They are simple, inexpensive foods that are guaranteed to make your body lose fat as well as feed your muscles, keep your energy levels up and make that skin and hair glossy!

**Proteins:** Salmon, halibut, tilapia, chicken breast, lean ground or sliced beef, ground turkey, turkey slices, tofu, eggs (boiled or just egg whites scrambled), low-fat cottage cheese, whey or soy protein powder

**Carbohydrates:** All fruits and vegetables, steamed brown rice, boiled beans (any type), oatmeal

**Fats:** Virgin olive oil, avocados, unsalted sunflower seeds

What about drinks? Water with lemon wedges or flavored with a no-calorie or sugar packet like Crystal Lite are your best bets. Iced tea with sugar substitute or
diet sodas should be drank in moderation since they both contain dehydrating caffeine. Alcohol is full of calories and should be eliminated except on your free-time day when you have no workouts scheduled.

How often to eat?

Breakfast is extremely important for losing fat and keeping healthy. Eating a bowl of hot oatmeal with protein powder mixed in, a couple of boiled eggs with dry wheat toast is a perfect way to get your day started; your metabolism will be revved up, you will eat less throughout the day, and your energy levels will be higher.

Eat six small meals throughout the day or three meals and three snacks. It is important to keep hunger at bay so that you don't attack the nearest snack machine around or reach for the chips and soda when you come through the door.

Eating after exercising

After an exercise session it is a good idea to eat a light snack such as a protein shake, cottage cheese and fruit or an energy bar to replenish depleted blood sugars and give your muscles fuel for recovery. Definitely drink plenty of fluids before and after exercising to replace lost water during exercising.

How to get that lean ballerina look...

There is a way to lengthen your muscles and even your spine! Stretching and flexibility play an important part in your well-being, health of your muscles, joints and tendons and also in the way that you look.

Stretching before and after a workout is like getting a massage and contributing to your body’s looks all in one. Longer, leaner muscles look more graceful and work better if you are doing exercises like pole dancing, gymnastics or yoga.

Yoga has more benefits than learning how to meditate...you can gain incredible balance, core strength and range of motion in your joints or increased flexibility.
And a bonus…

Taking care of that lovely skin!

Skin changes as you lose weight or gain muscle. If you do the above regimen - weight training, intense cardio and clean diet - you will lose fat, build muscle and keep everything healthy all the while and there should be no skin sagging issues. In fact, eating healthy and changing your body in this way will actually make your skin healthier! It will increase collagen, rejuvenate quicker and have a better color and tone.

Try all-over dry skin brushing, an old technique with wonderful benefits! Using a dry, vegetable fiber bristle brush, use long and short strokes towards your heart. Don’t brush bruised or broken skin, though. Don’t brush too hard or too vigorously, either. This brushing motion will move lymph fluids and cleanse body tissues, give you an all-over glow, helps decrease the appearance of cellulite and provides enough circulatory movement to equal a mini-exercise session!

Dry brush before you get into your bath or shower, use a loofah while in the bath also and moisturize skin afterwards with virgin olive oil, Shea or cocoa butter or a good lotion.
A final word…

Pole dancing is an incredibly physically demanding sport that also has risks of injury. By patiently building your strength with these strategic exercises, you lessen the chance of falling, pulling muscles or tearing tendons. Not only will your performance benefit, you get the added benefit of living in an amazing physique!

If you wish to contact me for any reason, please reach me at the following address: sara@learn-pole-dancing.com

Thanks and good luck on your journey to extreme pole fitness!