

# Are You Amish Strong?

Beats the gym, eh?

The average bale of hay weighs about 80 pounds. Why does this matter to you? Try throwing one around for 12 hours a day. It's precisely why 31-year-old Bucky Mitchell, a D.C.-based personal trainer who grew up within the Pennsylvania Amish culture, incorporates twisting strength moves into his clients' workouts.



That's right: Amish guys have super-strong cores—and they use them to stay injury-free for life.

“Men in the Amish Mennonite culture regularly move within the three planes of motion: baling and carrying hay, tending to farm animals, and raising barns,” Mitchell says. And as a result of that constant work, these men are rarely injured.

“Even the butchers constantly move heavy meat from the floor to overhead, and side to side,” says Mitchell. “You may find some small overuse injuries after 25 years because bodies naturally wear out, but rarely do you see things like ankle sprains or shoulder impingements, let alone back pain.”

Mitchell, who calls himself The Amish Trainer, not only incorporates farming-inspired movements into his workouts, but he also follows certain Mennonite eating practices—plus fish, which isn't a “farm-fresh” staple in Pennsylvania, and minus the extra-large dinners (daily ‘Thanksgiving’ feasts). “The Amish eat only what they grow or raise,” Mitchell says. “So I've adopted that idea of simplicity. It's about knowing where your food comes from, so you can avoid toxic additives and chemicals. I always buy my fruit and vegetables from the local farmer's market or from an Amish farm.”

Even if he sports a beard—which, he admits, is there to crack smiles out of his clients—Mitchell isn't your typical Amish guy. He lives an urban life. He drives a car. He stops eating carbs after 7 p.m. But he strives to maintain the ‘peace’ he learned during childhood, and even meditates and does yoga for 10 minutes every morning. “The Amish take time to pause and reflect,” Mitchell says. “But to me, the larger point of adopting parts of this culture is that, we have so much technology and things on the go, so ‘Amish’ training is really about simplifying life. They do *simple* very well.”

You can simplify your life by following Mitchell's lead, eating clean (and local), and taking time out of your day to slow down. And to score an Amish core, work these two moves (which both mimic loading hay or moving meat) into your regular fitness routine.

### **Diagonal Upward Chop**



- Grab a dumbbell and hold it with both hands above your right shoulder.
- Brace your core and rotate your torso to your right.
- Swing the dumbbell down and to the outside of your left knee by rotating to the left and bending at your hips.
- Reverse the movement to return to the start.
- Complete the prescribed number of reps toward your left side, then do the same number on your right side, holding the dumbbell over your left shoulder.

### **Weighted Russian Twist**



- Sit on the floor with your knees bent and your feet flat.
- With both hands, hold the ends of a dumbbell, the sides of a weight plate, or a medicine ball as you perform the movement.
- Brace your core, and rotate your torso to the right as far as you can.
- Pause, then reverse your movement and twist all the way back to the left as far as you can.