

How to stay active and flexible

Advice for older adults



The benefits of being active – if you don't use it, you lose it!

Being active helps:

- You to stay mobile and independent
- To keep your heart and lungs healthy
- To keep your bones and muscles strong
- To improve your mood

Being active improves:

- Your flexibility and prevents stiffness
- Your brain function and memory
- Your balance
- Your health and wellbeing



Getting started

How much activity?

You need at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week to keep yourself healthy and well. This can be divided into shorter and longer sessions. Shorter sessions of 10 to 15 minutes all add up. Aim for at least five 30 minute sessions a week.

Warm up

Always warm up before you exercise – march on the spot for 30 seconds holding onto the kitchen counter if you need some support.



What should I do?

- Moderate physical activity is exercise that makes you feel warm and raises your breathing rate to a level that you are still able to talk but you would not be able to sing. A good example is walking or swimming.
- You should include 3 sessions of strength and balance exercises in your routine every week. Some suitable exercises are included on this sheet.
- Start slowly and gradually build the amount of exercise you do over a number of weeks – it is very easy to be put off if you overdo it.
- Make out a simple diary for yourself on your phone or on a sheet of paper and tick the boxes as you go. It will help you to achieve your target and motivate you to keep on going.
- Every time you tick a box after completing your exercise, you have improved your health and wellbeing.

Tips before you begin

1. Wear flat comfortable supportive footwear.
2. Do not exercise if you are feeling unwell that day.
3. Your muscles may ache in the week that you commence exercising, this is normal and will settle as you continue.
4. Do the exercises at your own pace to suit your own ability. They are suitable for everyone and have benefits for everyone no matter what your level of fitness is.
5. The exercises can be adapted to suit your physical ability. If you have an injury just do them within your pain-free zone.
6. Remember, it is not a competition so do not over stretch yourself with any of the exercises, they should be comfortable to do.



Strengthening exercises

Arm strengthening

We sometimes forget the importance of your arm strength. Your arms do so much for you everyday, lifting, pushing pulling and detailed activities like writing.

Exercise 1

It's important to keep our arms strong.

Instruction

- Use a weight in each hand such as a tin of beans (½kg–1kg).
- Keep your back and head tall and keep your knees loose if you are standing.
- Lift one arm over your head at the time.
- Repeat 10 times on each side.



Exercise 2

This wall press up will keep our arms strong for lifting your own weight so it's the perfect exercise for you – "Your arms pushing your own weight."

Instruction

- Stand approximately half a metre in front of a wall with your feet hip width apart.
- Place your hands on the wall at shoulder level.
- Slowly lower your body weight towards the wall using your arms.
- Then slowly push your body weight as you straighten your elbows. Remember to keep your back straight.
- Repeat 10 times.
- You can progress this to push ups on a countertop and then to the floor over time.



Hip strengthening

This exercise is important for your hips and bottom. These muscles play an important part in keeping us steady when we walk.

Instruction

- Standing tall in front of a steady surface, place your feet hip width apart.
- Use your hands to support you.
- Lift your leg out to the side slowly to a level that is comfortable.
- Keep you back upright and hips facing straight ahead.
- Slowly lower your leg.
- Repeat 10 times on each side, pause between each one.



Thigh strengthening

This is a key exercise for keeping your knees healthy and strong. These are very important for walking, running and climbing stairs.

Instruction

- Sit tall in a chair.
- Straighten your right leg fully and bring your toes up towards you.
- Hold for 5 seconds and lower the leg slowly.
- Repeat 10 times on each side.



Flexibility and fitness exercises

Sit to stand

This exercise is one of the best! It is functional which means you do it all the time and need to be good at it in our normal activities of daily living.

Instruction

- Move forward in your chair.
- Place your feet behind your knees.
- Lean forward bringing your head over your knees.
- Push through your knees to stand up.
- You can use your hands to push up if you require like in the picture.
- Step back to the chair and slowly lower yourself back down to the chair by bending in the middle.
- Repeat 10 times – or as you are able.



Calf raises and toe raises

This exercise will keep your calves and your shins strong to give you a spring in your step. They help with your circulation too.

Instruction

- Stand tall with your feet hip width apart.
- Lift up on to your toes slowly.
- Slowly lower your heels back down.
- Lift your toes and front of your foot off the floor.
- Slowly lower them back down. Keep your hips forward.
- Repeat each set 10 times – as you are able.
- Hold on lightly to a stable surface if you need some support.

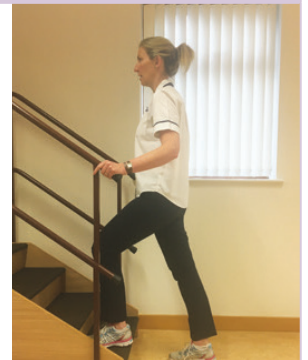


Step ups

This is a great fitness exercise and will help keep your knees in check.

Instruction

- Stand at the end of a step or stairs.
- Step up onto the step with the right leg leading and then step back down.
- Repeat 10 times
- Repeat again leading with the left.
- You can increase the speed of the exercise as you progress to increase the intensity.



Balance exercises

Balance work

Balance is a complicated subject. The good news is that by practising your balance and building strength it can be improved.

Exercise 1

Instruction

- Place your right foot directly in front of the left with heel to toe.
- Try to hold this position for 20–30 seconds.
- Change feet, left foot in front of right.
- Use your hands to support you on a stable surface if you feel unstable. Lighten the touch to progress.
- Repeat 3 times.



Exercise 2

Instruction

- Stand on your right leg and aim to hold for 20–30 seconds.
- Repeat on left leg.
- Use your hands to support you if you feel unstable. Lighten the touch to progress.
- Practise this 3 times.



If you find these challenging don't be put off, they will improve with practice.

If you find they are easily achievable you can challenge yourself by holding the positions for longer or by undertaking another task at the same time, like brushing your teeth.

Stretching exercises

Stretch

To finish, remember to do a nice stretch of your legs. Don't over stretch or bend, just do a gentle stretch to the level that you can feel it.

Instruction

- Sit tall, half way out of your chair.
- Straighten your left leg out in front of you with your heel resting on the ground.
- Bring your toes up towards you.
- Lean your hands on your right leg.
- Lean your body forward from your hips, keeping your spine neutral.
- Hold this gentle stretch for 20 seconds
- Repeat twice on each side.



Keep moving!

Last tip, it can be helpful to exercise with other people or in groups.

Find out if there is a walking club or running group near you or simply arrange with friends or family to meet for weekly activity. It will help you to stay motivated and it can be much more fun.

Congratulations to you... keep moving and looking after your health.



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- Find a Chartered Physiotherapist near you

If you need any specific advice about injuries or exercises, just ask your physio.

