

GETTING ACTIVE:

Strength Training, Balance, and Stretch Exercises

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Example Strength Training Exercises

Hand Grip

What You Need: Tennis ball or other small rubber or foam ball



This simple exercise should help if you have trouble picking things up or holding on to them. It also will help you open things like that pickle jar more easily. You can even do this exercise while reading or watching TV.

1. Hold a tennis ball or other small rubber or foam ball in one hand.
2. Slowly squeeze the ball as hard as you can and hold it for 3-5 seconds.
3. Relax the squeeze slowly.
4. Repeat 10-15 times.
5. Repeat 10-15 times with other hand.
6. Repeat 10-15 times more with each hand.

Wrist Curl

What You Need: Hand-held weights



This exercise will strengthen your wrists. It also will help ensure good form and prevent injury when you do upper body strength exercises.

1. Rest your forearm on the arm of a sturdy chair with your hand over the edge.
2. Hold weight with palm facing upward.
3. Slowly bend your wrist up and down.
4. Repeat 10-15 times.
5. Repeat with other hand 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 more times with each hand.

Arm Curl

What You Need: Hand-held weights or household items (soup cans, bottles of water)



After a few weeks of doing this exercise for your upper arm muscles, lifting that gallon of milk will be much easier.

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold weights straight down at your sides, palms facing forward. Breathe in slowly.
3. Breathe out as you slowly bend your elbows and lift weights toward chest. Keep elbows at your sides.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Arm Curl with Resistance Band

What You Need: Resistance band and sturdy, armless chair



This variation of the arm curl uses a resistance band instead of weights.

1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Place the center of the resistance band under both feet. Hold each end of the band with palms facing inward. Keep elbows at your sides. Breathe in slowly.
3. Keep wrists straight and slowly breathe out as you bend your elbows and bring your hands toward your shoulders.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Front Arm Raise

What You Need: Hand-held weights



This exercise for your shoulders can help you put things up on a shelf or take them down more easily.

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold weights straight down at your sides, with palms facing backward.
3. Keeping them straight, breathe out as you raise both arms in front of you to shoulder height.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower arms.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Side Arm Raise

What You Need: Hand-held weights



This exercise will strengthen your shoulders and make lifting groceries easier.

1. You can do this exercise while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold hand weights straight down at your sides with palms facing inward. Breathe in slowly.
4. Slowly breathe out as you raise both arms to the side, shoulder height.
5. Hold the position for 1 second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
7. Repeat 10-15 times.
8. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Seated Row with Resistance Band

What You Need: Resistance band and sturdy, armless chair



This exercise to strengthen upper back, shoulder, and neck muscles should make everyday activities such as raking and vacuuming easier.

1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Place the center of the resistance band under both feet. Hold each end of the band with palms facing inward.
3. Relax your shoulders and extend your arms beside your legs. Breathe in slowly.
4. Breathe out slowly and pull both elbows back until your hands are at your hips.
5. Hold position for 1 second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly return your hands to the starting position.
7. Repeat 10-15 times.
8. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Chair Dip

What You Need: Sturdy chair with armrests



This pushing motion will strengthen your arm muscles even if you are not able to lift yourself up off the chair.

1. Sit in a sturdy chair with armrests with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean slightly forward; keep your back and shoulders straight.
3. Grasp arms of chair with your hands next to you. Breathe in slowly.
4. Breathe out and use your arms to push your body slowly off the chair.
5. Hold position for 1 second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower yourself back down.
7. Repeat 10-15 times.
8. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Elbow Extension

What You Need: Hand-held weights or household items (soup cans, bottles of water)



This exercise will strengthen your upper arms. If your shoulders aren't flexible enough to do this exercise, try the chair dip.

1. You can do this exercise while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold weight in one hand with palm facing inward. Raise that arm toward ceiling.
4. Support this arm below elbow with other hand. Breathe in slowly.
5. Slowly bend raised arm at elbow and bring weight toward shoulder.
6. Hold position for 1 second.
7. Breathe out and slowly straighten your arm over your head. Be careful not to lock your elbow.
8. Repeat 10-15 times.
9. Repeat 10-15 times with other arm.
10. Repeat 10-15 more times with each arm.

Overhead Arm Raise

What You Need: Sturdy chair



This exercise will strengthen your shoulders and arms. It should make swimming and other activities such as lifting and carrying grandchildren easier.

1. You can do this exercise while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold weights at your sides at shoulder height with palms facing forward. Breathe in slowly.
4. Slowly breathe out as you raise both arms up over your head keeping your elbows slightly bent.
5. Hold the position for 1 second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
7. Repeat 10-15 times.
8. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Wall Push-Up



These push-ups will strengthen your arms, shoulders, and chest. Try this exercise during a TV commercial break.

1. Face a wall, standing a little farther than arm's length away, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean your body forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly breathe in as you bend your elbows and lower your upper body toward the wall in a slow, controlled motion. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Breathe out and slowly push yourself back until your arms are straight.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Back Leg Raise

What You Need: Sturdy chair



This exercise strengthens your buttocks and lower back.

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg straight back without bending your knee or pointing your toes. Try not to lean forward. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

Side Leg Raise

What You Need: Sturdy chair



This exercise strengthens your hips, thighs, and buttocks.

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with feet slightly apart, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg out to the side. Keep your back straight and your toes facing forward. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

Knee Curl

What You Need: Sturdy chair



Walking and climbing stairs are easier when you do both the Knee Curl and Leg Straightening exercises.

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance. Lift one leg straight back without bending your knee or pointing your toes. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out as you slowly bring your heel up toward your buttocks as far as possible. Bend only from your knee, and keep your hips still. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your foot to the floor.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

Toe Stand

What You Need: Sturdy chair



This exercise will help make walking easier by strengthening your calves and ankles.

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, feet shoulder-width apart, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly stand on tiptoes, as high as possible.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower heels to the floor.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Leg Straightening

What You Need: Sturdy chair



This exercise strengthens your thighs and may reduce symptoms of arthritis of the knee.

1. Sit in a sturdy chair with your back supported by the chair. Only the balls of your feet and your toes should rest on the floor. Put a rolled bath towel at the edge of the chair under thighs for support. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly extend one leg in front of you as straight as possible, but don't lock your knee.
3. Flex foot to point toes toward the ceiling. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower leg back down.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

Chair Stand

What You Need: Sturdy, armless chair



This exercise, which strengthens your abdomen and thighs, will make it easier to get in and out of the car.

1. Sit toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair with knees bent and feet flat on floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean back with your hands crossed over your chest. Keep your back and shoulders straight throughout exercise. Breathe in slowly.
3. Breathe out and bring your upper body forward until sitting upright.
4. Extend your arms so they are parallel to the floor and slowly stand up.
5. Breathe in as you slowly sit down.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Example Balance Exercises

Stand on One Foot

What You Need: Sturdy chair



You can do this exercise while waiting for the bus or standing in line at the grocery.

1. Stand on one foot behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance.
2. Hold position for up to 10 seconds.
3. Repeat 10-15 times.
4. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
5. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

Heel-to-Toe Walk



Having good balance is important for many everyday activities, such as going up and down stairs.

1. Position the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of the other foot. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch.
2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.
3. Take a step. Put your heel just in front of the toe of your other foot.
4. Repeat for 20 steps.

Balance Walk



Good balance helps you walk safely and avoid tripping and falling over objects in your way.

1. Raise arms to sides, shoulder height.
2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.
3. Walk in a straight line with one foot in front of the other.
4. As you walk, lift your back leg. Pause for 1 second before stepping forward.
5. Repeat for 20 steps, alternating legs.

Example Stretches

Neck



This easy stretch can help relieve tension in your neck. Try to stretch after strength training and during any activity that makes you feel stiff, such as sitting at a desk.

1. You can do this stretch while standing or sitting in a sturdy chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel a slight stretch. Be careful not to tip or tilt your head forward or backward, but hold it in a comfortable position.
4. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Turn your head to the left and hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

Shoulder



This exercise to stretch your shoulder muscles will help improve your posture.

1. Stand back against a wall, feet shoulder-width apart and arms at shoulder height.
2. Bend your elbows so your fingertips point toward the ceiling and touch the wall behind you. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort, and stop immediately if you feel sharp pain.
3. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
4. Let your arms slowly roll forward, remaining bent at the elbows, to point toward the floor and touch the wall again, if possible. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
5. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Alternate pointing above head, then toward hips.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

Shoulder and Upper Arm

What You Need: Towel



This exercise to increase flexibility in your shoulders and upper arms will help make it easier to reach for your seatbelt.

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold one end of a towel in your right hand.
3. Raise and bend your right arm to drape the towel down your back. Keep your right arm in this position and continue holding on to the towel.
4. Reach behind your lower back and grasp the towel with your left hand.
5. To stretch your right shoulder, pull the towel down with your left hand. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort in your right shoulder.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
7. Reverse positions, and repeat at least 3-5 times.

Chest

What You Need: Sturdy, armless chair



This exercise, which stretches the chest muscles, is also good for your posture.

1. You can do this stretch while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold arms to your sides at shoulder height, with palms facing forward.
4. Slowly move your arms back, while squeezing your shoulder blades together. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
5. Hold the position for 10–30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3–5 times.

Upper Back

What You Need: Sturdy, armless chair



This exercise is good for your shoulders and upper-back muscles.

1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold arms in front of you at shoulder height with palms facing outward.
3. Relax your shoulders, keep your upper body still, and reach forward with your hands. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
4. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
5. Sit back up.
6. Repeat at least 3–5 times.

Back 1

What You Need: Sturdy, armless chair



This exercise is for your back muscles.

1. Sit securely toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly bend forward from your hips. Keep your back and neck straight.
3. Slightly relax your neck and lower your chin. Slowly bend farther forward and slide your hands down your legs toward your shins. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
4. Hold for 10–30 seconds.
5. Straighten up slowly all the way to the starting position.
6. Repeat at least 3–5 times.

Back 2

What You Need: Sturdy chair with armrests



This exercise will help you do activities that require you to twist or turn to look behind you, such as backing out of a parking space or swinging a golf club.

1. Sit up toward the front of a sturdy chair with armrests. Stay as straight as possible. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly twist to the left from your waist without moving your hips. Turn your head to the left. Lift your left hand and hold on to the left arm of the chair. Place your right hand on the outside of your left thigh. Twist farther, if possible.
3. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
4. Slowly return to face forward.
5. Repeat on the right side.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 more times.

Upper Body



This exercise increases the flexibility of your arms, chest, and shoulders, and will help you reach items on the upper shelves of your closet or kitchen cabinet.

1. Stand facing a wall slightly farther than arm's length from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean your body forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Keeping your back straight, slowly walk your hands up the wall until your arms are above your head.
4. Hold your arms overhead for about 10-30 seconds.
5. Slowly walk your hands back down.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

Ankle

What You Need: Sturdy, armless chair



This exercise stretches your ankle muscles. You can stretch both ankles at once or one at a time.

1. Sit securely toward the edge of a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Stretch your legs out in front of you.
3. With your heels on the floor, bend your ankles to point toes toward you.
4. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Bend ankles to point toes away from you and hold for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

Calf



Because many people have tight calf muscles, it's important to stretch them.

1. Stand facing a wall slightly farther than arm's length from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Step forward with right leg and bend right knee. Keeping both feet flat on the floor, bend left knee slightly until you feel a stretch in your left calf muscle. It shouldn't feel uncomfortable. If you don't feel a stretch, bend your right knee until you do.
4. Hold position for 10–30 seconds, and then return to starting position.
5. Repeat with left leg.
6. Continue alternating legs for at least 3–5 times on each leg.

Thigh (Floor)



This exercise stretches your thigh muscles. If you have trouble getting down on the floor or back up again, try the Thigh (Standing) stretch.

1. Lie on your side with legs straight and knees together.
2. Rest your head on your arm.
3. Bend top knee and reach back and grab the top of your foot. If you can't reach your foot, loop a resistance band, belt, or towel over your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3–5 times.
7. Repeat at least 3–5 times with your other leg.

Thigh (Standing)

What You Need: Sturdy chair



Here's another exercise that stretches your thigh muscles.

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees straight, but not locked.
2. Hold on to the chair for balance with your right hand.
3. Bend your left leg back and grab your foot in your left hand. Keep your knee pointed to the floor. If you can't grab your ankle, loop a resistance band, belt, or towel around your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10–30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3–5 times.
7. Repeat at least 3–5 times with your right leg.

Lower Back



This exercise stretches the muscles of your lower back.

1. Lie on your back with your legs together, knees bent, and feet flat on the floor. Try to keep both arms and shoulders flat on the floor throughout the stretch.
2. Keeping knees bent and together, slowly lower both legs to one side as far as you comfortably can.
3. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
4. Bring legs back up slowly and repeat toward other side.
5. Continue alternating sides for at least 3-5 times on each side.

Hip



This exercise will stretch your hip and inner thigh muscles.

1. Lie on your back with your legs together, knees bent, and feet flat on the floor. Try to keep both shoulders on the floor throughout the stretch.
2. Slowly lower one knee as far as you comfortably can. Keep your feet close together and try not to move the other leg.
3. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
4. Bring knee back up slowly.
5. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times with your other leg.

Back of Leg (Floor)



This exercise stretches the muscles in the back of your legs.

1. Lie on your back with left knee bent and left foot flat on the floor.
2. Raise right leg, keeping knee slightly bent.
3. Reach up and grasp right leg with both hands. Keep head and shoulders flat on the floor.
4. Gently pull right leg toward your body until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg.
5. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times with left leg.

Back of Leg

What You Need: Bench or other hard surface, such as two chairs placed together



Here's another exercise that stretches the muscles in the back of your legs.

1. Sit sideways on a bench or other hard surface, such as two chairs placed together.
2. Keeping back straight, stretch one leg out on the bench, toes pointing up.
3. Keep other foot flat on the floor.
4. If you feel a stretch at this point, hold position for 10-30 seconds.
5. If you don't feel a stretch, lean forward from hips (not waist) until you feel stretching in the leg on the bench.
6. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
8. Repeat at least 3-5 times with your other leg.

Getting Down on the Floor



To get down on the floor:

1. Stand facing the seat of a sturdy chair.
2. Put your hands on the seat, and lower yourself down on one knee.
3. Bring the other knee down.
4. Put your left hand on the floor. Leaning on your hand, slowly bring your left hip to the floor. Put your right hand on the floor next to your left hand to steady yourself, if needed.
5. You should now be sitting with your weight on your left hip.
6. Straighten your legs.
7. Bend your left elbow until your weight is resting on it. Using your right hand as needed for support, straighten your left arm. You should now be lying on your left side.
8. Roll onto your back.

Getting Up from the Floor



To get up from the floor:

1. Roll onto your left side.
2. Place your right hand on the floor at about the level of your ribs and use it to push your shoulders off the floor. Use your left hand to help lift you up, as needed.
3. You should now be sitting with your weight on your left hip.
4. Roll forward, onto your knees, leaning on your hands for support.
5. Reach up and lean your hands on the seat of a sturdy chair.
6. Lift one of your knees so that one leg is bent, foot flat on the floor.
7. Leaning your hands on the seat of the chair for support, rise from this position.

Buddy Stretch

What You Need: A buddy and a resistance band or towel



This is a good over-all stretch that's fun to do with a partner. It stretches your shoulders, arms, back, and legs.

1. Sit on the floor facing your buddy and place your feet against your partner's feet.
2. Each of you should grab one end of a resistance band or towel. Depending on each person's flexibility, you may need to loop two bands or towels together.
3. Slowly pull the band or towel so that your buddy bends forward and you lean backward.
4. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Slowly return to starting position.
6. Now it's your buddy's turn to pull the band or towel so that you bend forward and your buddy leans backward. Hold for 10-30 seconds, and then return to starting position.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times.