

Knee Bends

Stand facing the chair or table as before. Place your feet shoulder width apart. Bend your knees and squat down by about 10 cm/4" by bending your knees. Come up and repeat. Keep your back straight and don't let your knees extend over your toes. This exercise will strengthen the big muscles in your hips and thighs and will improve your balance. This can help when climbing stairs, walking or bending to speak to someone. As you get stronger you can begin to hold the squat for a few seconds.



Sit to Stand

Sit on a chair that is not too low. Move forward into the front third of the chair. Put your feet flat on the floor then slide them back slightly. Lean forward over your knees keeping your head and shoulders high and push up through your heels to a standing position.

Try not to use your arms, just your legs.

Sit back down and then slowly repeat up to five times, building up to ten.



Toe Raises with Support

Stand tall beside a chair or table. Hold on and look ahead. Your feet should be hip width apart. Come back on to your heels raising the front of your feet off the floor, then lower your toes back to the ground, keeping your body as straight as possible. As balance improves, try holding on with just one hand or fingertips. This one strengthens your lower leg muscles and will make it easier for you to step backwards, or things such as pushing a buggy.



Calf Raises with Support

Stand tall facing a chair or table. Hold on and look straight ahead. Position your feet hip width apart. Slowly and with control come up onto your toes, hold for a slow count of three and lower your heels back down. As your balance improves, try holding on with just one hand or fingertips. This exercise strengthens your calf muscles and joints. It helps you manage everyday activities such as hanging out washing or reaching up into high cupboards.



Side Hip Strengthener

Stand tall beside a chair or table. Hold on and keep your exercising leg straight, with the foot straight forward. Slowly lift the leg out to the side, hold for a slow count of three and return. Try to keep the body upright and only move the leg, rather than the top part of your body. This strengthens your hip muscles, and helps you with stepping up onto pavements or kerbs.



Sideways walking

Stand up tall and place your hands on your hips. Use a support in front of you if needed such as a wall or railing. Take up to ten steps to the left and then take the same to right. This exercise is good for moving in a sideways direction, for example stepping out of the way on a pavement to allow someone past.



Heel Walking

Use a side support if required, such as a wall or railing. Stand tall and look ahead. Come back onto your heels, raising the front of your feet off the floor. Make sure your body stays nice and straight and you don't lean forward and stick out your bottom. Slowly walk up to ten steps on your heels. Lower the feet to the ground, turn around and take the same number of steps back on your heels the other way as before.



Toe Walking

Use side support if required, such as a wall or railing. Stand up tall and look ahead. Come up on your toes slowly. Walk up to ten steps on your toes then lower your heels back down and turn around. Walk the same number of steps the other way on your toes. Toe and heel walking can help improve balance when reaching up, for example into high cupboards or supermarket shelves.



My Condition, My Life, In Balance

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A guide to help you stay active and improve strength and balance at any age.



The Following Simple Exercises are Designed to Improve Strength and Balance

A natural consequence of being inactive at any age is the loss of muscle strength, flexibility, strength and balance.

Regular activity such as walking helps keep bones and muscles strong.

Doing these exercises twice a week in addition to walking when you can is a great way to improve strength and balance. It can also help people of any age living with long term conditions to become more active and self manage their condition.

Keep Safe While Exercising

It is important to listen to how your body feels while exercising and stop if you experience anything that does not feel right to you. It is also useful that you know that strength and balance exercises can make your muscles feel more tense than usual – they might shake a little and feel warmer – this is normal.

As with other exercise programmes, it is sensible to check with your doctor or nurse before you start something new, especially for those with long term conditions or those who are not used to doing any activity. These exercises can be undertaken by most people. The number of repetitions are only a guide and although these should be a bit challenging, if you feel dizzy, chest pain, shortness of breath or muscle pain that does not go away, do seek medical advice.

3 Steps to Being Active

1 Aim to be active every day, start by walking for a period of time that is manageable for you and your condition. By doing this every day, you will soon be able to gradually increase the amount of walking that you do. Try to build up to a daily walk of 30 minutes if you can but don't be discouraged if you can't. You still gain health benefits by walking for a short time compared to doing nothing.

2 As well as walking, try to do these exercises at least twice a week to improve strength and balance. As with walking, start with a number of repetitions that you are comfortable with and gradually increase as you get used to them.

3 It is also really important to reduce the amount of time you spend sitting down. Strength and balance exercises are a great way to do this.

Let's get started with the exercises

There are 14 exercises shown in this leaflet, start with a couple and build up as strength and balance improves.

Start by repeating each exercise up to five times and build up to a target of ten – more if you feel steady, balanced and able. Don't worry if five seems too much, start with an amount that you are comfortable with and gradually increase as you feel able to do so. You may find that some of the exercises are easier than others and that you can pace them up a bit quicker than the others, again this is completely normal.

Starting Gently Ankle Movements

This exercise will help mobilise the ankles, prevent or reduce stiffness, improve stability and help with walking.

Sit at the back of your chair to support your back. Lift the foot up and the point the foot down and pull the foot back. Do this movement slowly and try to pull back the toes as far as you can towards you and then point away as far as you can.

Repeat up to ten times on each foot but you can swap legs if they get tired.



Heel to toe using a spot on the floor

This exercise will mobilise the ankles, improve circulation, prevent or reduce stiffness, improve the range of movement and stability of the ankle joint, thus improving balance.

Sit towards the front of the chair with your back upright, your knees at a right angle and your feet initially flat on the floor. Support your back by holding the chair seat with both hands.

Place the heel of one foot on the floor under the knee and then lift the knee and place the toe on the same spot. Imagine there is a pound coin on the floor and you want to place the heel and then toe on exactly the same spot. Ensure the movement is slow, controlled and is as big as possible.



Seated Toes to Nose

This exercise will strengthen the muscles at the top of the foot, allowing you to easily lift the toes when stepping over objects and to walk better.

Sit at the back of the chair to support your back. Keeping the heel of your foot on the floor, strongly pull back your toes towards you and hold for a slow count of five. Feel the muscles on the top of the foot working hard, but remember to breathe. Relax and repeat up to ten times on each foot.



Seated Side Steps

This exercise will help mobilise the leg and hip muscles, help with transferring out of a chair or into and out of a car, help hip mobility and walking.

Sit forwards in the chair (away from the back of the chair a little) with good posture. Hold the sides of the chair to help keep the spine long. Take one leg out to the side and bring the other to join it. Take that leg back to the other side and bring the other to join it. Try to keep the steps no wider than hip width. Repeat up to ten steps to each side.



Moving On The Front Knee Strengthenener

You can try this exercise while you are sitting in a chair – or when watching TV!

Straighten your leg out, lift an inch, hold for a slow count of three and then slowly lower it again.

Try this up to five times with one leg and then the same with the other leg. Build up to a target of ten times per leg. You can progress further by sitting away from the back of the chair, keeping a straight back.



The Back Knee Strengthenener

Do this one standing in front of a chair or table.

Stand up tall draw one of your feet back along the floor and then bend the knee, bringing your foot slowly towards your bottom. Hold for a slow count of three.

Keep the knee of the bent leg slightly behind the knee of the straight leg. Return to the starting position slowly.

