



Public Health  
England



# Active at Home

A guide to being active at home  
during the coronavirus outbreak





## Who is this booklet for?



**This booklet has been developed to support older people and those who are shielded to be active and healthy at home.**

This is part of the Sport England **Join the Movement** campaign designed to provide inspiration and trusted information to the public about how to get active in and around the home during the coronavirus pandemic.

## Why is it important to stay active?

**Being active is good for our physical and mental wellbeing.** This is why we should all try to move regularly, including exercises to help stay strong and steady. This particularly applies to those of us who have health conditions or are older. Due to coronavirus we are all spending more time within our home, so it is important that we find ways to build activity into our day, every day.

Over the next few weeks, you may have health and social care appointments cancelled or delayed. **If you are waiting for treatment, being active is one of the best things you can do to look after your health, as part of a healthy lifestyle.** Being active at a level that feels comfortable is unlikely to make your health worse; in fact it can help to manage many health conditions.

Most of us are spending much more time within our home. This can be frustrating and upsetting, and it can be harder to be active when you can't do your normal daily activities. This guide will help you to find ways to build activity into your day. If the exercise suggested doesn't work for you, feel free to adapt them based on what you can do.

**Being active every day can help to:**



**Keep your spirits up**



**Get a good night's sleep**



**Stay independent**



**Stay at a healthy weight**



**Reduce risk of falls & fractures**



**Keep you steady on your feet**



**Keep your bowels regular**



**Reduce risk of heart attack, stroke, diabetes & some cancers**



**Prevent many health conditions from worsening**

## The two key activity types that help are:



### Strength and balance exercises

These are specific exercises that will help you to stay strong and steady your feet



### Aerobic exercise

This is activity that warms you up and gets you breathing slightly harder, it will help you to stay fit and well

## Safety

### **Being active is safe for the vast majority of people and it has many benefits for your health and wellbeing.**

There are some small steps you can take to reduce the chance of problems occurring when you are exercising in and around the home.

Most people can exercise without speaking to a doctor first, especially if their medical condition is under control. However, if you get any symptoms from a heart, kidney or metabolic condition you should phone your healthcare professional to check before you start.

1. Prepare your exercise space by clearing away unnecessary clutter
2. Keep something sturdy and solid nearby for support (for example a kitchen work surface)

3. Have a glass of water ready to sip as you exercise
4. Wear well-fitting, supportive shoes that are done up, and comfortable clothing
5. If you are exercising on your own, keep a telephone nearby, just in case you need it
6. Set the pace, start exercise at a level that you find easy and build up gradually
7. If you experience acute or severe pain anywhere or dizziness then stop and rest
8. It is common for muscles to feel a bit stiff for a few days after you have used them - this is a normal response and shows that your body is responding to the increased movement
9. Try not to hold your breath as you exercise, breathe normally throughout

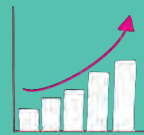
### Recap of key points



**Exercise is  
safe and  
helpful for  
most people**



**Try to be  
active every  
day**



**Try to do  
strength and  
balance  
exercises 2-3  
times each  
week**

## Strength and balance exercises

**Muscles, bones and joints like to be moved, lack of movement causes your muscles to waste away quickly and this affects your strength and your balance.**

The exercises below will help you to stay strong and steady. Aim to do these exercises 2-3 times throughout the week. You can split them up and do them a few at a time throughout the day, at a time that works for you. Remember to start small and build up gradually, as the exercises begin to feel easier you can increase the repetitions to 8-10. If you want to make it harder still, you can build up to 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions for each exercise.

Strength exercises can be done in sitting or standing. If you can't stand comfortably or safely, then choose the seated option.

### Seated Exercises

#### Always warm up before you start

Sit up straight in a supportive chair, take 2-3 deep breaths in and out to calm the mind and body in preparation for the exercises.

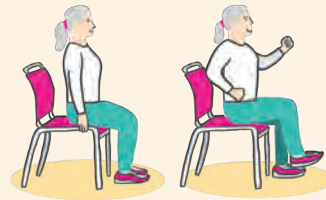
#### Heel lifts



Lift heels off the floor, then place them back down. Lift toes off floor then place down. Do these slowly and fully.

**30 seconds**

#### Chair marching



Lift one leg at a time, as if marching. You can add your arms in too, if comfortable.

**30 seconds**

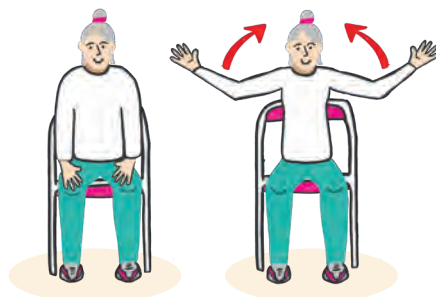
By the end of the warm up you should feel warmer and be breathing a little harder.

## Exercises

### Arm raises

Raise your arms out to the side and above your head, then slowly lower back down. Start with **3** then build up.

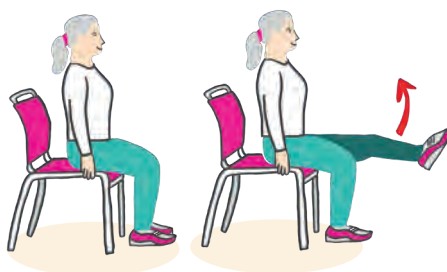
**Make this harder by** going very slowly and hold for 1 second at the top before you lower your arm down.



### Alternate leg extensions

Straighten out one leg in front of you, then lower slowly back down. Start with **3 each leg** then build up.

**Make this harder by** lifting the leg slightly off the chair as you straighten it.



### Arm curls

Keep elbows into your sides, bend one arm up, then slowly lower. Alternate sides. Start with **3 repetitions on each side.**

Make this harder by holding a small weight, bottle of water or tin of food.





## Cool down

Let your breathing settle and enjoy the feeling of accomplishment!



### Hamstring stretch

Feel gentle stretch at back of thigh

**Hold for 20 seconds**



### Chest opening

Feel gentle stretch across your chest

**Hold for 20 seconds**



### Breathe

3 deep breaths in and out

## Standing Exercises

### Always warm up before you start

Remember to have something sturdy, like a work surface, next to you. Use it to stay steady and safe.

### Marching



Slow march on spot, gradually lifting the knees slightly higher, or by marching a little faster and adding arms in.

**30 seconds**

### Shoulder rolls



**3 each way**

You should feel warmer and be breathing a little harder now.

## Exercises

### Mini squats

Stand tall, slowly bend your knees keeping your body upright. Push up and return to standing. Start with **3 repetitions** then build up.

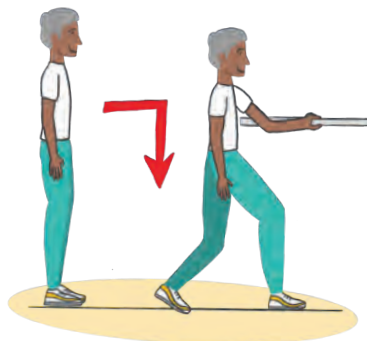
**Make this harder by** going a further into the squat, and holding for longer.



### Small lunges

Take a small step forward and bend both knees. Push back into standing. Start with **3 repetitions** each leg and build up.

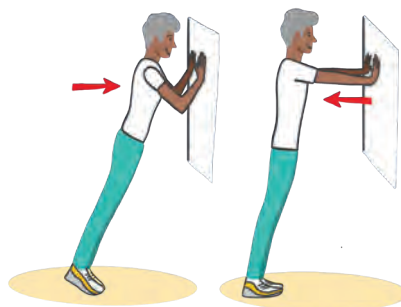
**Make this harder by** stepping further forward, ensuring you return from the lunge position in one steady step backwards.



### Wall press up

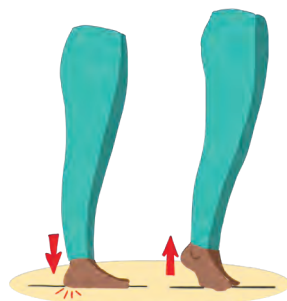
Slowly bend both arms so that your nose moves closer to the wall. Slowly push back into standing. Start with **3 repetitions** then build up.

**Make this harder by** moving very slowly and smoothly.



## Heel/toe raises

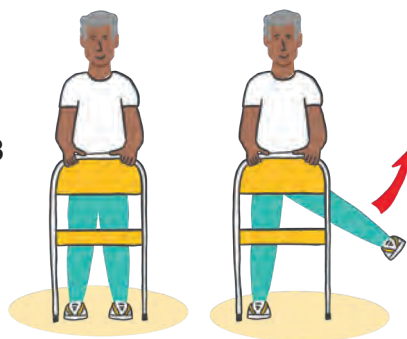
Push up onto your toes, keeping bottom in, then slowly lower back down. Do these slowly whilst maintaining good posture. Start with **3 repetitions** and build up.



**Make this harder by** lowering down very slowly.

## Sideways leg lift

Lift one leg slowly out to the side keeping your upper body straight. Slowly lower back down. Start with **3 repetitions** each leg then build up.



**Make this harder by** moving the leg very slowly.

## Cool down

Let your breathing settle and enjoy the feeling of accomplishment!



### Hamstring stretch

Hold for 20 seconds



### Chest opening

Hold for 20 seconds



### Breathe

3 deep breaths

## Ways to build activity into your day

As well as doing these exercises 2-3 times a week, **try to avoid any long periods of inactivity and find ways to build movement into your day, every day.** Any movement is good, particularly if it makes you feel a little bit warm and makes you breathe a little faster.

**Here are some ideas of ways to stay active at home:**



Cleaning



Dancing



Gardening



Going up and down stairs



Stretching regularly

## Staying healthy

**A few other things that will help you to stay as healthy and happy as possible during this period:**



### Wash your hands

using soap and hot water, for at least 20 seconds, regularly throughout the day



### Stay connected

with phone calls, letters, emails, text messages or a cheery wave from the window



### Limit intake

of foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt and sugar



### Consider taking a Vitamin D supplement

of 10 micrograms a day for healthy muscles and bones, if you aren't often outdoors

**Stick to regular mealtimes** and eat a balanced diet that includes a variety of:

- fruit and vegetables (fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juice)
- starchy foods (bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta or rice)
- beans, pulses, fish and meat
- two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily
- dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese)
- oils and spreads (choose unsaturated and use in moderation)

If you are struggling to eat well, switch to smaller meals and frequent snacks



### Take your prescription medicine

regularly and ensure that you have at least two weeks' supply



### Keep your mind active

with crosswords, puzzles and letter writing



### Stay hydrated

by aiming to drink 6 - 8 glasses of water a day



### Limit alcohol and don't smoke

Limit your alcohol intake to no more than (and ideally less than) 14 units in a week, and support is available to help you stop smoking too



### Prioritise your sleep

going to bed and waking up at a regular time can really help and make sure you give yourself time to wind down before bed

### It is normal to feel worried and anxious

about yourself and your loved ones during the coronavirus outbreak. Focus on the things you can control rather than the things you can't. **This might mean focusing on getting into a routine and taking small practical steps each day to do what you need to do. Stick to trusted sources of information** and if news stories make you feel anxious, think about switching off for a while.

**If you have coronavirus symptoms (new persistent cough and/or high temperature) and need help, or have been told to report symptoms, visit [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) or call NHS 111**

## Planning your day

The days can feel very long when you are at home so much. Having a couple of goals each day and planning your day in advance can help; it will remind you to move around during the day too. Here's an example:



**Try to do things that you LOVE to do,  
as well as the things you NEED to do**

## Staying safe at home

Moving around less can make you less steady on your feet. Falls are common and can result in injury and frustrating periods of reduced independence.

### Simple tips to make your home safer:

- use a nightlight in the bedroom, a bedside light or a torch by the bed in case you need to get up in the night
- when you first wake up, sit on the edge of the bed and do a few seconds of marching with the legs to get the blood flowing. This will reduce your chance of dizziness when you stand up
- keep stairs and steps free of clutter
- keep floors clear of trailing wires, wrinkled or fraying rugs and carpets, or anything else you might trip or slip on
- keep active – strength and balance exercises have the best effect for making you steadier on your feet
- stand up slowly if you have been sitting for a while, and count to 10 before setting off

## What to do if you fall

**If you do have a fall, lie still for a minute, try to stay calm and check yourself for injuries.**

If you know you can't get up, or feel pain in your hip or back, then try to call for help using your phone or pendant alarm, or by



banging on radiators or walls until help arrives. Try to keep warm by covering yourself with whatever is close by, keep moving your limbs and roll from side to side if you are able to. If you need urgent medical help, you should call 111 or in an emergency 999.

**If you are unhurt and think you can get up, then you should:**

1. Roll onto your side, and then push up onto your elbows
2. Use your arms to push yourself onto your hands and knees
3. Crawl towards a very stable piece of furniture (a sturdy chair or bed) and hold onto it for support
4. Slide or raise the foot of your stronger leg forwards so it's flat on the floor
5. Lean forwards and push up using your arms and front leg, slowly rising to a standing position
6. Turn around and sit down. Sit for a minute or two and catch your breath.

**Even if you are unhurt, make sure that you tell a healthcare professional or carer that you have fallen.**

## Useful contacts

### **NHS 111**

**111 or 111.nhs.uk**

If you have any concerns about your health

### **Rethink Mental Illness advice and help line**

**0808 801 0440**

For support with issues related to mental health and wellbeing

### **Citizens Advice**

**03444 113 111**

Provides support and assistance on a wide range of issues

### **Age UK**

**0800 169 65 65**

Provides advice and information for older people

### **Silver Line Helpline**

**0800 470 80 90**

If you are aged 55 or over, call for a cheerful chat, day or night.

### **Samaritans**

**116 123**

If you want to talk through any concerns, worries and troubles

## Useful websites

### **We Are Undefeatable** [www.weareundefeatable.co.uk](http://www.weareundefeatable.co.uk)

Support for those of us with health conditions to become more active

### **Join the Movement**

[www.sportengland.org/news/join-movement](http://www.sportengland.org/news/join-movement)

Ideas for all on how to stay active during the coronavirus outbreak

### **10 Today** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p087wddm>

Includes short ten minute routines to get you stretching and moving

**We would value your feedback on this booklet.**

**If you are happy to be contacted please text the word ACTIVE to 07860 033 611 by 31 August 2020.**

**We will then get in contact with you via your mobile phone. You can opt out at any time without giving any reason.**

It is really important that we let you know that text messages to this number are charged at your standard text messaging rate. You will also still be charged if you text after the deadline. Texts sent without the keyword or where the keyword is misspelt will not reach us and will still be charged. All information will be handled in accordance with Sheffield Hallam University's information governance policy and we will never share your data with third parties



This booklet has been jointly prepared by Public Health England, Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) and the National Centre for Sport & Exercise Medicine (NCSEM) to provide useful information to support people to stay physically active during isolation. PHE, SHU & NCSEM have taken their reasonable endeavours to ensure that the content of this booklet is, to the best of their knowledge, accurate at the time of printing.

Before following any exercise or health guidelines, consult with a health professional if you: consider it necessary; have any concerns about your health; or are not sure whether the exercises are suitable.

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