

EXERCISES TO IMPROVE YOUR BALANCE AND FLEXIBILITY



This pamphlet explains the benefits of practicing stretching and balance exercises, as well as providing a wide range of examples that can be performed at home. If you have any questions, please speak to a healthcare professional.

Why is it important?

- Increases flexibility
- Reduces risk of injury
- Improves posture
- Reduces muscle pain
- Increases energy levels
- Reduces risk of falling
- Increases range of motion
- Improves mental health

Ways to enjoy stretching

- Entertain yourself as you perform the exercises: listen to music, a podcast or even watch TV
- Dress for the occasion: wear comfortable clothes that won't restrict your movement
- Make it social: get your friends and family involved so you can all benefit from the exercises
- Set goals: write down your progression of each exercise so you know when you hit your goals

How often should you perform these exercise?

To get the most of these exercises, try to engage in at least 5 of these exercises two to three times per week.

Rotate between all these exercises in order to ensure your whole body benefits from your stretching routine.

Balance and Coordination Exercises

Single leg stance:

Equipment: chair

1. Stand behind a steady chair and hold onto the back with both hands
 2. Lift your right foot and balance on your left
 3. Hold for 30secs (or as long as possible)
 4. Switch feet
- Goal: stand on one foot without a chair for 30 seconds



Sideways walking

Equipment: none

1. Stand with your feet together, knees slightly bent.
 2. Step sideways in a slow and controlled manner, moving one foot to the side first.
 3. Move the other foot to join it.
 4. Perform 10 steps each way
- Goal: increase speed and move without looking at feet. Optional to add a resistance band



Tightrope walks

Equipment: chair, straight line

1. Lay/find a straight line
 2. Start at the end of the line and hold your arms to the side
 3. Walk along the line without stepping to the side
 4. Walk at least 15 steps
 5. Repeat 3 times
- Goal: continue practicing and eventuate to walking with heel to toe steps without losing balance



Step ups

Equipment: small step

1. Step up with your right leg.
 2. Bring your left leg up to join it.
 3. Step down again and return to the start position.
 4. Perform 5 step ups per leg
- Top tip: Use a wall or railing to help step onto the platform if needed



Flexibility Exercises

Tricep stretch

Equipment: chair if needed

1. Stand in a neutral position, with soft knees
2. Straighten the left arm upward and bend at elbow so that the left hand reach back towards the shoulder blade
3. On exhale, bring the right arm up to the left elbow and gently press the left elbow back
4. Engage core muscles to support low back and avoid arching back
5. Hold for 30 seconds and then alternate sides
6. Repeat 3 times



Neck Rotation

Equipment: none

1. Sit upright with shoulders down. Look straight ahead.
2. Slowly turn your head towards your left shoulder as far as is comfortable. Hold for 5 seconds and return to the starting position.
3. Repeat on the right.
4. Complete 3 rotations on each side



Quadricep stretch

Equipment: chair or wall if needed

1. Stand in a neutral position, with soft knees
2. Keep left leg in place and bend the right knee up so the right foot meets gluteal (buttock) muscles and knee points towards the floor
3. Grab the right ankle/foot with your right hand and use your left hand to balance against a wall or chair if needed
4. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and alternate legs Repeat 3 times on each side



Sideways bend

Equipment: none

1. Stand upright with your feet hip-width apart and arms by your sides.
2. Slide your left arm down your side as far as is comfortable. As you lower your arm, you should feel a stretch on the opposite hip. Your right arm can come over your head if this is comfortable for you.
3. Repeat with your right arm.
4. Hold each stretch for 10 seconds and perform 3 on each side.

Top tip: You can do this bend whilst sitting down in a chair or on an exercise ball!



Calf stretch

Equipment: none

1. Place your hands against a wall for stability. Bend the right leg and step the left leg back at least a foot's distance, keeping it straight. Both feet should be flat on the floor.
2. The left calf muscle is stretched by keeping the left leg as straight as possible and the left heel on the floor.
3. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat with the opposite leg.
4. Perform 3 on each side.



Chest stretch

Equipment: chair if needed

1. Sit upright and away from the back of the chair. Pull your shoulders back and down. Extend your arms out to the side. (You can also stand whilst doing this)
2. Gently push your chest forward and up until you feel a stretch across your chest
3. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds and repeat 5 times. Tip: To make it more difficult, hold a towel in both hands behind your back



Sitting Exercises

Upper Body Twist

Equipment: chair

1. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, cross your arms and reach for your shoulders.
2. Without moving your hips, turn your upper body to the left as far as is comfortable. Hold for 10 seconds.
3. Repeat on the right side.
4. Twist 5 times on each side.



Hip Marching

Equipment: chair

1. Sit upright and do not lean on the back of the chair. Hold on to the sides of the chair
 2. Lift your left leg with your knee bent as far as is comfortable. Place your foot down with control.
 3. Repeat with the opposite leg.
 4. Do 5 lifts with each leg.
- Top tip: Do this exercise standing up to increase difficulty



Ankle Stretching

Equipment: chair if needed

1. Sit upright, hold on to the side of the chair and straighten your left leg with your foot off the floor
2. With your leg straight and raised, point your toes away from you.
3. Point your toes back towards you
4. Try 2 sets of 5 stretches with each foot.



Arm Raises

Equipment: chair if needed

1. Sit upright with your arms by your sides.
2. With palms forwards, raise both arms out and to the side, and up as far as is comfortable.
3. Return to the starting position.
4. Keep your shoulders down and arms straight throughout. Breathe out as you raise your arms and breathe in as you lower them. Repeat 5 times.



Top tips for performing these exercises:

Complete all exercises in a slow and controlled manner

Stop if any pain is felt

Do not hold your breath

Get others involved where possible!

Don't give up! Consistency is key