

Simple Strength, Balance and Flexibility Exercises to Do at Home

For someone with medical problems, or who has been inactive and wants to exercise vigorously, always check with a doctor before beginning a physical activity program. A doctor can help find a program suited to a patient's needs and physical condition. If the patient has a high risk of heart disease, a doctor may conduct an exercise stress test to identify any potential problems.

Each exercise should be done 8 to 10 times for two sets.

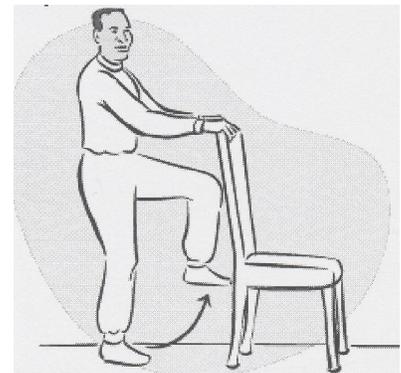
For the patient, remember:

- Complete all movements in a slow, controlled fashion.
- Don't hold your breath.
- Stop if you feel pain.
- Stretch each muscle after your workout.

Hip Flexion

Strengthens thigh and hip muscles.

1. Stand straight, holding tall, stable object for balance.
2. Slowly bend one knee toward chest, without bending waist or hips.
3. Hold the knee up.
4. Slowly lower leg all the way down.
5. Repeat with other leg.



Hip Extension

Strengthens buttock and lower-back muscles.

1. Stand 12 to 18 inches from table/chair.
2. Bend at hips; hold onto table/chair.
3. Slowly lift one leg straight backwards.
4. Hold the leg up.
5. Slowly lower leg.
6. Repeat with other leg.



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Knee Flexion

Strengthens muscles in back of thigh.

1. Stand straight; hold onto table/chair for balance.
2. Slowly bend knee as far as possible so foot lifts up behind you.
3. Hold position.
4. Slowly lower foot all the way back down.
5. Repeat with other leg.



Knee Extension

Strengthens muscles in front of thigh and shin.

1. Sit in chair. Put rolled towel under knees, if needed.
2. Slowly extend one leg as straight as possible.
3. Hold position and flex foot to point toes toward head.
4. Slowly lower leg back down.
5. Repeat with other leg.



Side Leg Raise

Strengthens muscles at sides of hips and thighs.

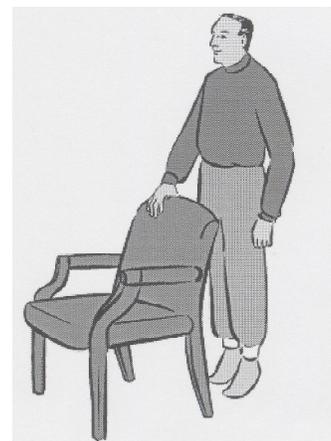
1. Stand straight, directly behind table/chair, feet slightly apart.
2. Hold table/chair for balance.
3. Slowly lift one leg to side, 6-12 inches.
4. Hold position.
5. Slowly lower leg.
6. Repeat with other leg.
7. Keep back and both knees straight throughout exercise.



Plantar Flexion

Strengthens ankle and calf muscles.

1. Stand straight, holding onto table/chair for balance.
2. Slowly stand on tip toe, as high as possible.
3. Hold position.
4. Slowly lower heels all the way back down.

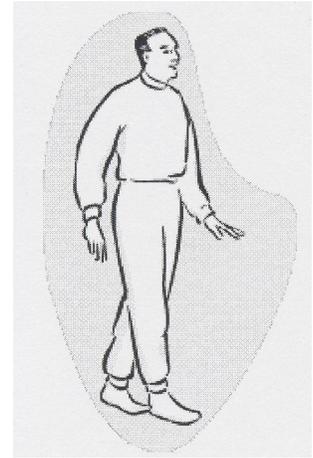


Anytime/Anywhere

These types of exercises can help your balance. You can do them almost anytime, anywhere, and as often as you like. Just make sure you have something sturdy nearby to hold onto if you become unsteady.

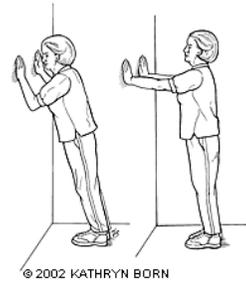
Examples:

- Walk heel-to-toe. Put your heel just in front of the toes of the opposite foot each time you take a step. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch. (See Illustration.)
- Stand first on one foot then the other. You can do this while you are waiting somewhere such as the bus stop or the grocery store.
- Stand up and sit down without using your hands.



Wall Push-ups

1. Place hands flat against the wall.
2. Slowly lower body to the wall.
3. Push body away from wall to return to starting position.



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Chair Squats

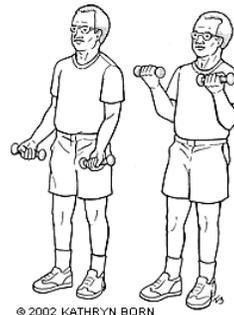
1. Begin by sitting in the chair.
2. Lean slightly forward and stand up from the chair.
3. Try not to favor one side or use your hands to help you.



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Biceps Curl

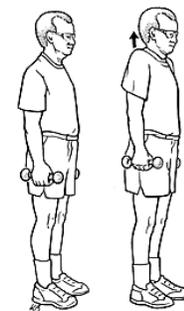
1. Hold a weight (can also use canned goods, or anything that has some weight on it if there is not access to actual weights) in each hand with your arms at your sides.
2. Bending your arms at the elbows, lift the weights to your shoulders and then lower them to your sides.



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Shoulder Shrugs

1. Hold a weight in each hand with your arms at your side.
2. Shrug your shoulders up toward your ears and then lower them back down.



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Arm Raise

Strengthens shoulder muscles.

1. Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold hand weights (one to two pounds to start) with your arms straight down at your sides and your palms facing inward. Your shoulders should be down (not lifted toward your ears).
3. Keeping a slight bend in your elbows, lift both arms to the sides until they are parallel to the ground. Keep your wrists straight. Take about three seconds to lift your arms only to shoulder level.
4. Hold for one second. Then slowly lower your arms so that they are straight down by your sides again. Take about three seconds to lower your arms.
5. Repeat 6 to 8 times.



Triceps Extension

Strengthens the triceps muscles (back of the upper arm).

1. Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold a hand weight (one to two pounds) in your left hand and raise your left arm up as far as you can. Bend your arm so your elbow is pointing toward the ceiling, with your hand and the weight behind you. Support your left arm by holding it just below the elbow with your right hand.
3. Slowly (about three seconds) straighten your left arm so your left hand is reaching toward the ceiling.
4. Hold for one second. Then, slowly (about three seconds) bend your elbow to lower the weight behind you. Continue using your right hand to support your left arm throughout the exercise.
5. Pause, then straighten and lower your arm again.
6. Complete one set, then put the weight in your right hand and work your right arm.
7. Repeat 6 to 8 times with each arm.



Hamstring Curl

Stretches quadricep muscles on front of thigh. Strengthens hamstring muscles on back of thigh.

1. Stand behind a straight-backed chair, with both hands on the back of the chair for balance. Place your feet slightly apart. Keep your upper body straight.
2. Shift your weight onto your right leg and slowly bend your left knee, keeping both knees together.
3. Lift your left foot behind you about 10 to 12 inches off the floor.
4. Slowly return to starting position. Repeat.
5. Complete one set, then work the other leg.
6. Repeat 6 to 8 times with each leg.



Standing on One Foot

Improves balance.

1. Stand close to a wall, chair or table for balance.
2. Shift your weight onto one leg. Stand on that foot and stretch the other leg out in front of you, a few inches off the floor.
3. Stand on one leg for eight counts.
4. For an extra workout, flex and point your lifted foot. That is, bend the ankle so your toes point away from you, then flex the ankle to bring the toes back towards you. Flex and point eight times.
5. Slowly return your leg to the starting position. Repeat with the other leg.



Tips courtesy of FamilyDoctor.org and the American Heart Association.