

SAFE

EXERCISE AT HOME





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WHY IS STAYING ACTIVE IMPORTANT?

Regular physical activity and exercise are vital for older people. They help maintain fitness, strength and balance and can improve thinking and mood. This assists older people maintain their ability to do daily activities and live independently.

Public health guidelines recommend **all older people** should be active **every day**. Any movement is better than none. There are extra benefits from activities that promote strength, balance, fitness and flexibility. Choose an activity you enjoy; start slowly and gradually build up. Similar recommendations apply to people of any age, including those with health conditions or walking problems.

Physiotherapists from around Australia developed the *Safe Exercise at Home* website and booklet, which provide advice on exercises you can do at home. These physiotherapists are experts in exercise and physical activity for older people and people with health problems.

<https://www.safeexerciseathome.org.au>

This website and booklet provide information on ways to stay active at three levels of function and fitness. If you are not sure which level best suits you, start at the easiest level (Level 1) and work your way up.

The information on the Safe Exercise at Home website and in this booklet are not intended to replace individual health professional care.

Please talk to a health professional before you start an exercise program, especially if you have existing health, walking or balance problems. Many GPs and physiotherapists now offer telehealth appointments if you cannot make it in person.





STAY SAFE WHILE YOU EXERCISE

- Have a **clear space** to exercise. Remove obstacles (eg rugs, cords, furniture) so you don't trip.
- Exercise in a **well-lit** area that is **not too hot or cold**.
- Wear **comfortable clothing** and **well-fitting shoes** or runners.
- **Drink water** before and after exercise.
- **Balance exercises** must be done **safely**. Stand with a bench, table, or sturdy chair in front of you or next to you, that you can hold onto if needed. Have a wall close behind you to steady yourself.
- **Start** any new exercise, **slowly** and **carefully**. Watch any videos before you try the exercise. Try the 'easy' option before the 'hard' option.
- Consider whether you should **exercise** with **someone**.
- Keep your **phone** in reach if you are exercising alone.
- Muscle soreness can occur, especially after new or harder exercises. Soreness should go away after a couple of days. Contact a health professional if pain persists more than a few days.
- **Listen to your body!** Change the exercise if it causes pain, discomfort or you feel unsteady or unsafe. You can do an easier version, hold on for balance or leave it out. Seek advice from an exercise specialist.

(physiotherapist/exercise physiologist).

- After a minor illness (eg cold) start at an easier level and slowly work up to your previous level.
- If you have a major illness, new health condition, went to hospital or are below your usual level of ability, seek advice from your health professional on how to re-start exercises safely.

Remember to follow current COVID-19 restrictions while exercising.

TIPS FOR STAYING MOTIVATED

- **Start** with **small** changes.
- **Choose** activities you will enjoy.
- **Plan** your exercise.
- Make activity part of your **daily routine**.
- **Tell someone** about your exercise plans or write them down.
- **Track** exercises in a diary or calendar. Track your steps with a pedometer, activity monitor, phone app or smart watch.
- **Gradually increase** your exercise. For example, increase the number of steps you take each day.
- **Vary** your activities to keep them interesting.
- **Focus** on what you have **achieved**.

Remember, any movement is better than none.



HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU DO?

Aim to build up to **30 minutes** of physical activity **most days of the week**. This can be a single 30 minute session, or several shorter episodes of activity. Remember even one 10 minute session is helpful and better than none.

Each week, you should aim to include exercise that challenges your **fitness**, **balance**, and **strength**.

Fitness exercise

- You should feel a little out of breath, but be able to talk. If you are too out of breath to talk you are working too hard.

Strength exercise

- You should be able to do each exercise 8 – 12 times (called the number of repetitions), then rest, and repeat each set of repetitions another 1-2 times. If you are doing 12 repetitions easily it may be time to increase the weight.
- If you haven't done an exercise before, start with no weight or a light weight that you can use comfortably.

Balance exercise

- Stay safe! Make sure you have a bench / table / wall close by for support.
- These exercises work your balance, so you should feel a little unsteady, but still in control.
- If you feel you might overbalance, the exercise is too challenging. Try an easier version. One way you can make standing balance exercises easier is by having your feet further apart.
- Many exercises work both strength and balance together. All the three exercise levels provided on the Safe Exercise at Home website have strength and balance grouped together.

LEVEL 1 – FOUNDATION

These exercises suit people who:

- Walk slowly
- Use a walking aid
- Feel unsteady while walking and picking things up from the ground
- Have medical conditions that limit activity
- Get some help with housework and other activities such as shopping.

It is important to exercise safely. A physiotherapist can help you decide how to start exercising safely. A little bit of exercise more often may work best.

Fitness exercise

- Try and be physically active for 5 minutes every hour, such as walking once round your whole house or living area.
- Put some music on for motivation.
- Use the television advertisement breaks to exercise.

Strength and balance exercises

Do these exercises three to five times per day.

- Stand up and sit back down from your chair 10 times.
- Use the kitchen bench for stability and rise up onto your toes.
- Stand at your kitchen sink and march on the spot for 1 minute.



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EXERCISE EXAMPLE - LEVEL 1

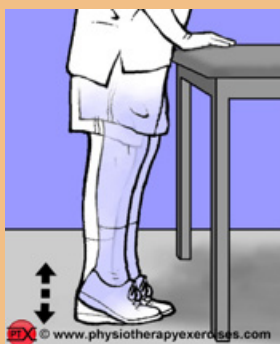
Examples of exercises for this level are shown on the next page. Remember to exercise safely. If you need assistance, a physiotherapist can help you decide how to start exercising safely. A little bit of exercise more often may work best at first.

You can print these out and place where you can see them (e.g. your fridge). You can record your exercises on the calendar.

For more exercise ideas, see the *Safe Exercise at Home* website for links to video / YouTube videos of suitable exercises.

The information on the *Safe Exercise at Home* website and in this booklet are not intended to replace individual health professional care. Please contact your doctor, physiotherapist or exercise professional if you have concerns or questions about your exercise program.

Bilateral calf raises



Aim

To strengthen your calf muscles.

Instructions

Stand with your feet together holding onto something steady like your kitchen bench. Start with your heels on the ground. Rise up onto your toes. Lower your heels back to the ground. Repeat 5-10 times per set.

Standing up and sitting down



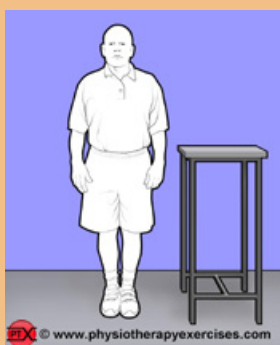
Aim

To improve sit to stand ability.

Instructions

Sit on a chair or bed with your feet underneath your knees. Practice standing up and sitting down. Use your hands to assist you to stand up if necessary. Make sure your weight is spread equally through both legs. Repeat 5-10 times per set.

Stand with narrow base of support






Aim

To improve standing balance.

Instructions

Have a stable support nearby, so you can use your hands if you need to. Stand with your feet together. Practice maintaining the position for up to 30 seconds. If this is too difficult stand with your feet further apart.

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LEVEL 2- MODERATE

These exercises suit people who:

- have a well-controlled medical condition
- can walk down the street
- get puffed easily or feel a little unsteady while walking
- get minimal help with daily activities.

It is important to exercise safely, a physiotherapist can help you decide how to start exercising safely.

Fitness exercise

- Try and be physically active for 5 minutes every hour, such as walking twice round your whole house
- Use the kitchen bench for stability to do exercises such as walking sideways or marching up and down on the spot
- Put some music on for motivation
- Use the television advertisement breaks to exercise
- Try to walk outside round your house or round your street block at least once daily.

Strength and balance exercises

- Stand up from your chair 10 times every hour or so. See if you can do it without using your arms.
- Use the kitchen bench for stability and rise up onto your toes 10 times

EXERCISE EXAMPLE - LEVEL 2, MODERATE

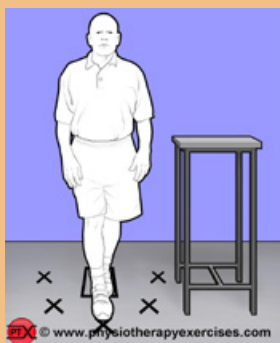
Examples of exercises for this level are shown on the next page. Remember to exercise safely. If you need assistance, a physiotherapist can help you decide how to start exercising safely.

You can print these out and place where you can see them (e.g. your fridge). You can record your exercises on the calendar.

For more exercise ideas, see the *Safe Exercise at Home* website for links to video / YouTube videos of suitable exercises.

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Stepping to targets with hand support nearby



Aim

To improve your ability to walk in different directions.

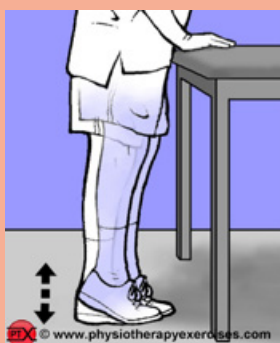
Instructions

Position yourself standing with targets placed in a semi-circle on the floor in front of you. Practice stepping to the targets alternately. Ensure that you move most of your weight to the front leg. Hand support can be used if necessary. Repeat with the other leg.

Progressions and variations

Easier: 1. Decrease distance to the targets. Harder: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Increase distance to the targets.

Bilateral calf raises



Aim

To strengthen your calf muscles.

Instructions

Stand with your feet together holding on to a support. Start with your heels on the ground. Rise up onto your toes. Lower your heels back to the ground. Repeat 10 -15 times per set.

Progressions and variations

Harder: Use less hand support.

Standing up and sitting down



Aim

To improve your ability to stand up.

Instructions

Sit on a chair or bed with your feet underneath your knees. Practice standing up and sitting down. Make sure your weight is spread evenly on both feet. Repeat 10 – 15 times.

Progressions and variations

Easier: 1. Use a higher chair. 2. Use hands to assist. Harder: Use a lower chair.

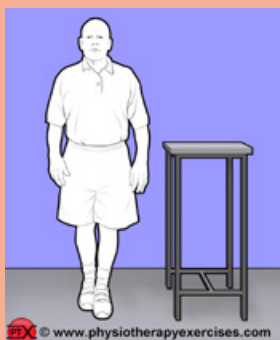
Stand in semi-tandem stance

Aim

To improve your standing balance.

Instructions





Have a stable support nearby. Stand with one foot forward with no space between your feet. Practice standing steady in this position for up to 30 seconds. Use your hands for support if you feel unsteady. Repeat with other foot in front. Do this 3 or 4 times.



Progressions and variations

Easier: 1. Position the feet further apart.

Harder: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Turn head and trunk in different directions. 3. Stand with one foot directly in front of the other.

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LEVEL 3 - ADVANCED

These exercise suit people who:

- Regularly walk
(at least 30 minutes in one session)
- Feel steady walking outside
- May attend a gym
- Engage in activities such as gardening

If you have had two or more falls in the past 12 months it is advisable to start on level 1 or 2. You should consult your doctor or physiotherapist to help you reduce your risk of falling.

Fitness exercise

- Walk outdoors.
- If you are unable to go outside, try climbing up and down stairs, putting on some music and walking around the house or marching on the spot (high stepping).
- Go swimming, or ride a bike (outdoors or an exercise bike) if you enjoy these activities.

Strength and balance exercises

- Check if your gym or exercise class has classes available on-line. You can replace weights with tins of food, water bottles or milk bottles filled with sand or water, or elastic/TheraBand's.
- Stand up and sit down from a chair without using your arms.
- Rising up onto your toes.

EXERCISE EXAMPLE - LEVEL 3, ADVANCED

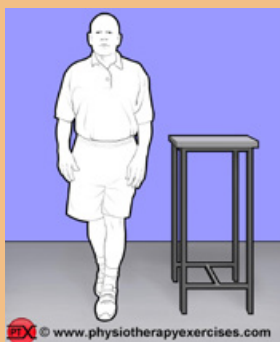
Some examples of exercises for this level are shown on the next page. Remember it is important to exercise safely. If you need assistance, a physiotherapist can help.

You can print these out and place where you can see them (e.g. your fridge). You can record your exercises on the calendar.

The *Safe exercise at home* website also has links to video / YouTube videos of suitable exercises, and tips on how hard you should work and how to stay motivated.

The information on the *Safe Exercise at Home* website and in this booklet are not intended to replace individual health professional care. Please contact your doctor, physiotherapist or exercise professional if you have concerns of questions about your exercise program.

Stand in tandem stance



Aim:

To improve your ability to stand and balance.

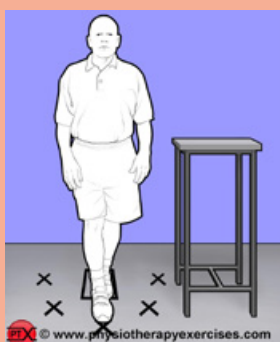
Instructions

Have a stable support nearby. Stand with one foot forward in front of the other. Practice maintaining the position. Use the hand support if you feel unsteady. Repeat with other foot in front.

Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Position the feet in semi-tandem stance. 2. Position the feet further apart. More advanced: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Turn head and trunk in different directions. 3. Add movement of the arms in different directions. 4. Throw and catch a ball in this position. 6. Stand on one leg.

Stepping to targets with hand support nearby



Aim

To improve your ability to walk in different directions.

Instructions

Position yourself standing with feet hip width apart and targets placed in a semi-circle on the floor in front of you. Practice stepping to the targets alternately. Ensure that most of your weight is transferred to the stepping leg and that hand support is used if necessary. Repeat with the other leg.

Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Decrease distance to the targets. More advanced: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Increase distance to the targets. 3. Place the targets in a full circle.

Walking up and down stairs



Aim

To improve your ability to walk up and down stairs.

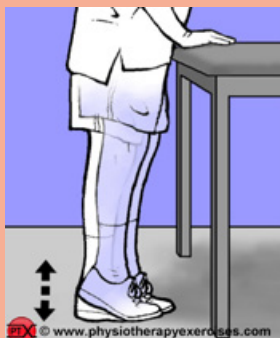
Instructions

Position yourself standing at the bottom or top of a flight of stairs. Practice walking up and down the stairs.

Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Walk down one step at a time. 2. Use hand-rail for balance. More advanced: 1. Increase the height of the stairs. 2. Wear a backpack with weights in it.

Bilateral calf raises



Aim

To strengthen your calf muscles.

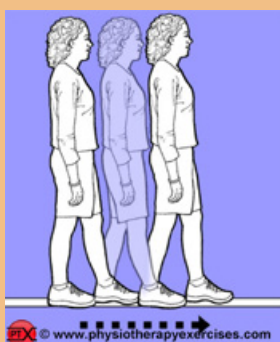
Instructions

Position yourself standing with your feet together. Start with your heels on the ground. Finish with your heels off the ground.

Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Provide hand support for balance. More advanced: 1. Stand on one leg at a time.

Walk heel to toe



Aim

To improve your ability to walk and balance.

Instructions

Position yourself standing on a line with one foot directly in front of the other. Practice walking along the line by placing one foot straight in front of the other, i.e., heel to toe.

Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Place feet on either side of the line.

Standing up and sitting down



Aim







To improve your sit to stand ability

Instructions

Position yourself sitting on a chair or bed with your feet underneath your knees. Practice standing up and sitting down. Make sure your weight is spread evenly on both feet.

Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Increase the height of the chair. More advanced: 1. Decrease the height of the chair.

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SUCCESS STORIES

My name is Lesley and I am 83 years old. I live at home with my husband and am the primary carer for him.

I have always been active and kept busy with family activities with my large family. Several years ago I had a flare up of severe back and leg pain that resulted in a couple of weeks in hospital, and limited me to very short distance walking inside with a wheelie frame. At that stage I worked on a home exercise program most days to help with my balance, strength and posture, which gradually helped me to walk without the frame inside, and to get back to some of the activities I enjoyed away from home with the frame.

Over time I stopped the home exercise program, but had also commenced a weekly Pilates class with a physiotherapist which I have continued doing with my husband until the Coronavirus restrictions were put in place. I noticed quickly that without the Pilates program that my standing up and walking seemed to be deteriorating, so I have restarted some of the home exercise program I was previously doing which seems to be helping again.

I do find that the regular exercise, through the Pilates class or the home exercises or both, do help to keep me able to maintain my walking and balance to keep me doing many of the things I enjoy to do especially with family, although within the limits of my ongoing pain and walking problems.

MY STORY

Name:

Age:

Goals:

Plan:

