



# SIMPLE CHAIR EXERCISES

to increase strength, flexibility and mobility

## Considerations and precautions

*These exercises can be performed in a standing or seated position.  
The following precautions should be considered:*

- Before you begin any exercise program seek medical clearance.
- Stop exercise immediately and consult your doctor if you experience any of the following; a) nausea, b) dizziness, c) breathlessness, d) tightness in the chest or e) severe muscular or joint pain.
- If you feel pain or discomfort whilst performing a particular exercise, STOP.
- If you are using a chair to perform exercises then ensure it is secure and on a non-slip surface prior to starting.
- If you are on insulin or certain oral medications to manage your diabetes you need to take special precautions to prevent hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose levels). You may need to modify your carbohydrate intake and/or speak to your doctor or diabetes educator about medication adjusted according to the intensity and duration of exercise. Carrying foods such as fruit juice or jellybeans is advisable to prevent and treat hypoglycaemia.
- It is advisable not to exercise if your blood glucose levels are above 15mmol/L and there are ketones in your urine or if you feel unwell.
- During exercise if you start to feel unwell or experience any symptoms such as chest pain, severe shortness of breath or palpitations then stop exercise immediately and seek medical advice.
- If blood glucose levels are less than 6mmol/L before exercise, depending on how hard you exercise and how your body responds to exercise, you may need to have a carbohydrate snack first (eg fruit, slice of bread. This is important if you take insulin or some oral diabetes medications (sulphonylureas). Ensure you regularly monitor your blood sugar levels before and after exercise.
- Your blood glucose levels should be monitored regularly. An exercise diary is often helpful in determining the effect of exercise on your blood glucose levels.
- Ensure that you drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise to stay hydrated.
- If you have had or still have trouble with your heart or blood pressure then exercises that involve having both hands above your head at the same time should be avoided.
- Ensure that whilst exercising you never hold your breath. Simply breathe normally.
- Wear loose fitting clothing. In cold weather wear layers (rather than thick/woollen clothing) so that you can take them off when you get warm to avoid overheating.
- Avoid bouncing and jerking movements during exercise and try to relax when performing each movement.

# Exercise Session: Stretching/Flexibility

Flexibility of the body's muscles and joints is an important component of movement. A number of factors affect flexibility including age, gender, and joint structure. Increased flexibility, through regular stretching, may reduce your chances of falling, increase your quality of movement and decrease the risk of injury.

For best results, stretches should be held for a minimum of 15-20 seconds and repeated twice per session. The more sessions of stretching you can complete during the week the better.



1. Neck

- Drop head towards shoulder.
- Ensure that both shoulders remain relaxed and do not shrug ie, keep shoulders down away from ears.
- For a stronger stretch place hand on head and gently pull down towards ear.
- This stretch should be performed slowly and gently. If choosing to use your hand for further resistance, do not pull too hard and over stretch.



2. Chest

- Lace fingers behind your back. If you can't reach, just hold hands out towards the back.
- Lift hands up towards the roof until a stretch is felt in the front of the chest.
- This stretch can be performed seated or standing. A straight back must be maintained and the head should remain in a neutral position ie, do not stick chin out.



3. Calf

- Leaning against a wall/chair place one foot forwards and one foot back as if on train tracks.
- The front leg is bent and the back straight.
- Push down and back into the floor with the back foot until a stretch is felt in the back of the lower leg.



4. Hips/Groin

- Stand with feet apart and toes pointing forwards.
- Bend one knee and lunge sideways.
- Keep a straight back.



5. Thighs

- Stand on one leg holding onto the back of a chair.
- Bend one knee backwards, lifting the heel towards your bottom (on the same side).
- Hold ankle with one hand and feel the stretch at the front of the leg.
- Always maintain a straight back.
- The weight-bearing leg may be bent. If you cannot reach your foot, rest it on a chair or hold the bottom of your pants.



6. Hamstrings

- Whilst sitting place one leg on a second bench or chair.
- Lean forwards over the leg keeping a straight back.
- This stretch can be performed at different heights depending on flexibility. This stretch can also be completed sitting on the floor or on a bed.



7. Spine

- Sit on a chair so that your back is touching the back of the chair.
- Reach around to one side with both arms and hold the back of the chair.
- Keep both feet on the ground and look over the shoulder on the side you have twisted to.
- Come back to the centre and repeat on the other side.



8. Shoulder

- Move one arm across the chest so that it is straight.
- Place the opposite hand on the elbow of the arm across the chest.
- Maintain a straight back throughout.
- If this stretch is too strong then bend the arm across the chest slightly.

## Exercise Tips

Exercise is more fun if done to music. Turn on the radio or play a record. Really, exercises should be performed four/five times per week or as often as possible. Remember, a little bit of exercise is better than none and more is better than a little. Each exercise session should take about 15-30 minutes depending on how many times you repeat each exercise. Muscle stiffness is quite normal when you begin to exercise for the first time. If stiffness persists, or you feel over tired then you may be working too hard. Slowing down and progressing more gradually may help.

# Exercise Session: Strength/Mobility



**9. Shoulders and Chest**

- If you have had any recent heart surgery (past 7-10 weeks) then do not perform this exercise with both arms at a time, ie., move one arm at a time.
- While breathing in through your nose, slowly raise your arm(s) from beside your chair to above your head.



- While breathing out through your mouth, slowly lower your arm(s) to the starting position beside your chair.
- Repeat 5-10 times.
- You can also do this with small hand weights or using a Thera-band.



**10. Shoulders**

- Let your arms fall beside your chair and relax.
- Slowly lift the shoulders and circle them backwards until you reach the starting position.



**Shoulders - continued**

- Slowly lift the shoulders and circle them forwards until reaching the starting position.
- Repeat 5-10 times.
- You can also try this exercise holding small weights eg 500g canned food or 0.5-2kg hand weights.



**11. Back**

- Raise both arms to shoulder height straight out in front.
- Slowly twist the body/trunk toward one side ensuring that your head follows.



- Move back to the centre and repeat on the opposite side.
- Maintain a straight back throughout.



**12. Arms**

- Start with both arms down by your sides, palms up.
- Slowly bend at the elbows and curl the arms so that the fists end up at your shoulders.



*continued overleaf*



arms - continued

- Slowly lower the arms back to the starting position and repeat.
- This exercise can be completed with weights in the hands, such as baked bean tins etc., to make it harder.
- Work your way up to two lots of 10-15 repetitions.



13. Ankles

- Lift one foot slightly off the ground.
- Circle the ankle first in one direction then repeat in the other direction.
- Move the toes up and down.



- Place the foot back on the ground.
- Repeat with the opposite foot.
- Repeat 5-10 times each foot.



14. Legs

- Sit forward on the chair and place feet on the floor.
- With a bent leg, lift one foot a few centimetres off the floor.
- Hold for a second and then return it to the floor. Repeat with the other leg.
- When lifting keep a straight back and squeeze the bottom drawing in the stomach.
- If this is too easy then straighten the leg before placing it back on the ground.
- Work your way up to performing two lots of 10-15 repetitions.



Easier version



15. Buttocks/Lower Back

- Lie on your back with knees bent and feet slightly apart.
- Lift your hips and lower back off the floor/bed so you are resting on your shoulders.
- You can steady yourself by placing your arms on the ground.
- Lower the hips back down to the ground and repeat.
- To make it harder when your hips are off the ground lift and hold one foot slightly off the ground as well. Repeat with opposite leg.
- Repeat 2-3 times, making sure you have correct technique. If you are tiring and losing technique, STOP.



16. Calf Raises

- Stand facing a chair with your hands resting on the back of the chair.
- Rise up slowly onto your toes as high as you can go.

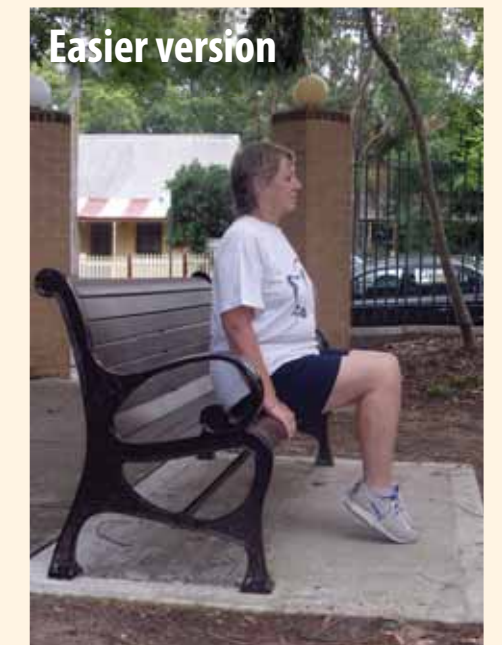


Harder version

- Slowly lower back down.
- Once you feel confident, you can do these without holding onto the chair, or even perform them off a small step height.
- If this is too hard, you can do them by raising your feet up onto your toes.
- Work your way up to performing two lots of 10-15 repetitions.



Easier version



Easier version



- Start sitting on a chair with feet shoulder-width apart and arms crossed over your chest or by your side.
- Lean forward and stand up from the chair.
- Carefully sit back down on the chair.
- Make sure you rise up fully from the chair and return to the chair as controlled as possible on the way down. Try not to use your hands to assist you.
- Work your way up to performing two lots of 10-15 repetitions.

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