

Ageing with vitality: Your everyday guide to healthy active living



strength



flexibility



balance



endurance



healthy eating

4

Recommended exercises



STRENGTH



BALANCE



FLEXIBILITY



ENDURANCE

Many types of physical activity can improve your health and future independence. Whether you do the exercises shown in this chapter or other physical activities that accomplish the same goals, gradually work your way up to include stretching, balance, flexibility and endurance activities.

This chapter provides exercises, tips and ideas for four main types of physical activity:



- **Strength**
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- **Balance**
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- **Flexibility**
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Introduction

Each exercise in this guide indicates the type of physical activity it provides (strength, balance, flexibility or endurance) and if it provides more than one type of physical activity. For example, toe stand exercises for strength can also help to improve your balance. Most exercises provide progression options to help you choose an exercise level suitable for your starting point.

How much, how often

As discussed in Chapter 3 – Go!, it is important to mix up the types of physical activity to increase the health benefits to you. The aim is to do a range of physical activities that incorporate strength, balance and flexibility and endurance to reach at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. If you lift weights, alternate these exercises with time on the treadmill or exercise bike. End your routine with stretching exercises. If you focus mainly on endurance activities, be sure to also add stretching, balance and strength exercises to your routine.

A sample weekly physical activity program covering all four types of activity is provided in the workbook. Use the weekly physical activity plan in your workbook to help you plan your own program.



Warm up/cool down

It's important to spend about five minutes at the beginning and end of your routine to warm up and cool down. Warming up and cooling down give your muscles a chance to get ready to work and gradually return to rest at the end. These 'before-and-after' activities help prevent injury and reduce muscle soreness later. Here are a few suggestions.

- Do some light endurance activity first, such as walking for five minutes.
- If you're going to be walking briskly or running, gradually build up to that pace.
- At the end of your activity, gradually slow down and let your body cool down.
- Do a few exercises to work the muscles and joints you'll be using in your activity. For example, if you plan to swim, do a few arm exercises first to warm up your arms and shoulders.

Safety

No matter which type of physical activity you do, there are certain safety tips to help you get the best benefits from physical activity.

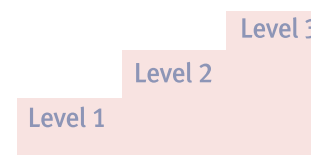
- Talk with your doctor or health professional if you plan to significantly increase your level of physical activity.
- Talk with your doctor or health professional if you are unsure about doing a particular exercise. For example, if you've had hip or back surgery/problems, talk about which exercises might be best for you.
- Don't hold your breath during exercises. Holding your breath while straining can cause changes in blood pressure. This is especially true for people with heart disease.

- Breathe regularly and evenly while exercising. If you cannot do this you are probably working too hard, reduce the intensity of what you are doing.
- Proper form, technique and safety go hand-in-hand. Concentrate on stabilising your core body by tightening your abdomen and back muscles while performing exercises.
- Keep your body in the correct alignment with your back straight and your hips under your shoulders. This is very important to avoid a back injury.
- Avoid 'locking' your arm and leg joints in a tightly straightened position. Keep your knees and elbows slightly bent to avoid injury.

Progressing to higher levels

To help you build your strength, balance, flexibility and endurance over time, most exercises in this book have three levels of progression — 1, 2 and 3. The exercise description and illustrations show the base level (**Level 1**) for each exercise. This is great place to start. As your muscles strengthen, your balance and flexibility improve and your cardiovascular fitness increases, you may be able to progress to a higher level of physical activity.

Progression **levels 2** and **3** give hints on how you can gradually increase the difficulty of the exercises and continue to build on the benefits of physical activity over time. If you are already active, then a higher starting point may be a more suitable.



Quick tips

- **Listen to your body and use common sense when you're physically active.**
- **If you feel sick or have pain during or after physical activity, you might be overdoing it.**
- **While you want to feel like you have done something, doing too much could leave you feeling exhausted, injured or with sore joints and muscles that stop you being physically active.**
- **Take it slow and gradually build up for the best ongoing benefits.**
- **None of the exercises in this guide should cause severe pain. If they do, stop and seek advice. Remember if it is a serious medical emergency call 000.**


strength



How to improve your strength: recommended exercises

Even very small changes in muscle strength can make a real difference in function, especially in people who have already lost a lot of muscle. An increase in muscle strength can make it easier to do everyday things such as; get up from a chair, climb stairs, carry shopping bags, open jars and even play with your grandchildren. Lower-body strength exercises will also improve your balance.

How much, how often?

- Try to fit strength exercises for all your major muscle groups into your weekly physical activity of 30-minutes each day, but don't exercise the same muscle group on any two days in a row. Use the weekly physical activity plan in your workbook. 
- Muscle soreness lasting a few days and slight fatigue are normal after muscle-building exercises, at least at first. After doing these exercises for a few weeks, you will probably not be sore after your workout.

Make it affordable

Exercising at home is just one way to be active. Getting out into the community can also offer opportunities to be active for little cost, as Gwen found:

'I'm 69 and live on my pension income. My kids try to spoil me, but I'd rather do things on my own as much as possible. I checked out a gym where I could use strength-building equipment, but it really was quite expensive. I decided to look at the local council website and found a heap of activities that I could do for \$3 a session. I joined a seniors strength class and thoroughly enjoy working out to music with resistance bands and have become great friends with two of the ladies from my class. Even though I felt I may be too old, I also joined a walking group. Despite being the oldest, my endurance has greatly increased and I can now keep up with even the youngest person. I also hear more about what's going on in my neighbourhood. I've always been active, but never as active and social as I am now.'



About strength exercises

To do most of the strength exercises in this book, you need to lift or push weights, or use a resistance band.

Equipment

- You can use weights, resistance bands or common objects from your home. You can also use strength-training equipment at a gym.
- Some exercises in this guide require a chair. Choose a sturdy chair that is stable enough to support your weight when seated or to hold onto during the exercise.

How heavy?

- Start with light weights (or no weights at all) and gradually increase the amount of weight you use. Starting out with weights that are too heavy can cause injuries. Your body needs time to get used to strength exercises.
 - If you can't lift or push a weight at least eight times in a row, it's too heavy for you. Reduce the amount of weight.

Lifting weights

- Take three seconds to lift or push a weight into place, hold the position for one second, and take another three seconds to return to your starting position. Don't let the weight drop, returning it slowly is very important.

- Over time, gradually build up to 10-15 repetitions for each exercise.
- For some exercises, you may want to start alternating arms and work your way up to using both arms at the same time.
- To prevent injury, don't jerk or thrust weights into position. Use smooth, steady movements.

Breathing

- Breathe out as you lift or push, and breathe in as you relax. For example, if you're doing leg lifts, breathe out as you lift your leg, and breathe in as you lower it. This may not feel natural at first, and you probably will have to think about it for a while as you do it.

You don't need to do all the exercises listed in this section. Do a variety and don't exercise the same muscle group two days in a row. Use your workbook to do a variety of strength exercises.



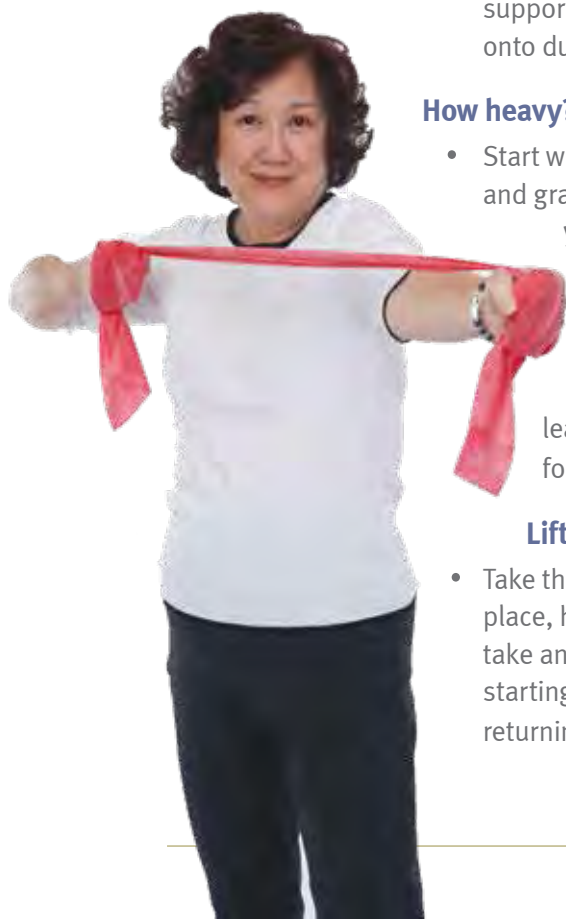
Quick tip

A repetition, or rep, is one complete movement of an exercise. A set is one group of reps. In this guide, a set of strength exercises is 10 to 15 repetitions. Use the strength and balance daily record in your workbook to keep track of the number of strength exercises you do.



Making it real !

Want to be able to lift your carry-on bag into the over-head locker of an aeroplane, or get in and out of the car more easily? Keep doing those strength exercises and you'll get there.



Making your own hand weights

You don't have to go out and buy weights for strength exercises. You can make your own weights from unbreakable household items. Find something you can hold on to easily.

- Fill a plastic milk container with sand or water and tape the opening securely closed.
- Fill a sock with nuts or rice and tie up the open end.
- Use common grocery items, such as bags of rice, vegetable or soup cans, or bottled water.

Strength exercises

- | | |
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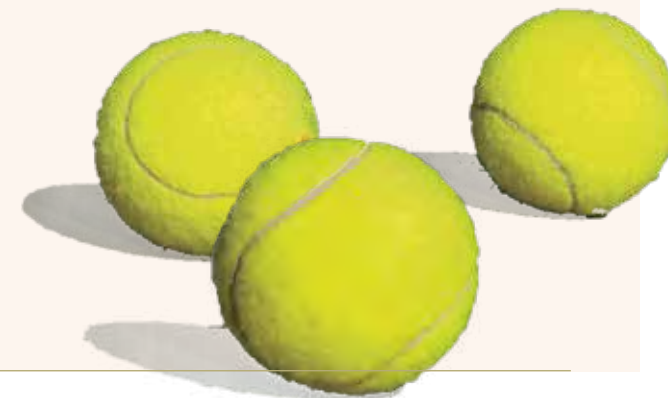


STRENGTH

Hand grip

This simple exercise should help if you have trouble picking things up or holding on to them. It also will help you open things like a jam jar more easily. You can even do this exercise while reading or watching TV.

1. Hold a tennis ball or other small rubber or foam ball in one hand.
2. Slowly squeeze the ball as hard as you can and hold it for three to five seconds.
3. Relax the squeeze slowly.
4. Repeat 10–15 times.
5. Repeat 10–15 times with other hand.
6. Repeat 10–15 times more with each hand.



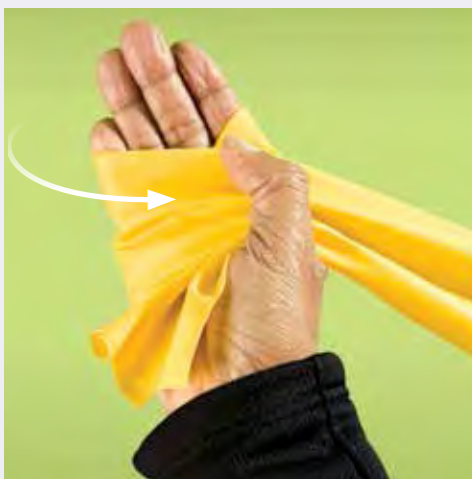
Working with a resistance band

Wrapping a resistance band

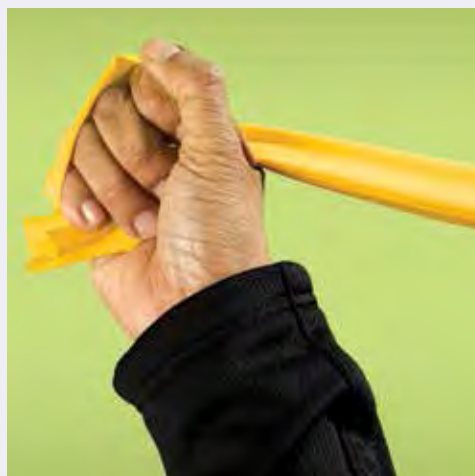
Resistance bands are stretchy elastic bands that come in several strengths, from light to heavy. You can use them in some strength exercises instead of weights.



1. Lay the band flat in your hand with the end toward your little finger.



2. Wrap the long end of the band around the back of your hand.



3. Grasp firmly.

Progressing using a resistance band

You can buy resistance bands from sports stores, department stores and some health professionals such as physiotherapists.

- If you are a beginner, try exercising without the band until you are comfortable, then add the band.
- Choose a light band if you are just starting to exercise.
- Move on to a stronger band when you can do two sets of 10 to 15 repetitions easily.

Progressing using hand weights

Muscle strength builds over time. Gradually increase the amount of weight you use to build strength. When you can do two sets of 10 to 15 repetitions easily, increase the amount of weight at your next session.

Start out with a weight you can lift at least 12 times. When you can do two sets of 10 -15 reps more easily, add more weight. Keep progressing until you reach your goal and then maintain that level longterm.



Quick tip

- Hold on to the band tightly (some bands have handles), or wrap it around your hand or foot to keep it from slipping and causing possible injury.
- Do the exercises in a slow, controlled manner and don't let the band snap back.

Wall push-up



STRENGTH

These push-ups will strengthen your arms, shoulders and chest.
Try this exercise during a TV commercial break.

1. Face a wall, standing a little further than arm's length away, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean your body forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly breathe in as you bend your elbows and lower your upper body toward the wall in a slow, controlled motion. Keep your feet flat on the floor and your body straight.
4. Hold the position for one second.
5. Breathe out and slowly push yourself back until your arms are nearly straight. Keep your elbows slightly bent so you don't lock your joints.
6. Repeat 10–15 times.
7. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Push up off lower levels, such as a table or chair secured safely against a wall.

Level 3: Do regular push-ups on the floor. Start from on your knees and progress to your feet.



This exercise will strengthen your upper back, shoulder and neck muscles and should make everyday activities, such as raking and vacuuming easier
(See *Working with a resistance band* on page 35).



Seated row with resistance band

STRENGTH



1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Place the centre of the resistance band under both feet. Hold each end of the band with your palms facing inward.
3. Relax your shoulders and extend your arms beside your legs. Breathe in slowly.
4. Breathe out slowly and pull both elbows back until your hands are at your hips, pulling your shoulder blades together.
5. Hold position for one second, keeping your shoulders down.
6. Breathe in as you slowly return your hands to the starting position.
7. Repeat 10–15 times.
8. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Use a heavier strength band or straighten legs to put more stretch on band.

Overhead arm raise



STRENGTH



BALANCE

This exercise will strengthen your shoulders and arms. It should make activities, such as lifting items into overhead cupboards, hanging out the washing and lifting and carrying grandchildren easier.

1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold weights beside you at shoulder height, with elbows bent and your palms facing forward. Breathe in slowly.
4. Slowly breathe out as you push upwards with both arms up over your head. Keep your elbows slightly bent so you don't lock your joints.
5. Hold the position for one second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
7. Repeat 10–15 times.
8. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.
9. If you have a shoulder limitation, exercise can be modified; rather than push weight above head, push weight out in front of chest.

As you progress:

Level 2: Do this exercise while standing.

Level 3: Use a heavier weight. You may want to use alternate arms until you can lift the weight comfortably with both arms.



This shoulder exercise can help you put things on a shelf or take them down more easily.



STRENGTH



BALANCE

Front arm raise



1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold weights straight down at your sides, with palms facing backward.
3. Breathe out as you raise one arm in front of you to shoulder height, keeping your arm nearly straight. Keep your elbows slightly bent so you don't lock your joints.
4. Hold the position for one second.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arm.
6. Repeat for the other arm.
7. Repeat each arm 10–15 times.
8. Rest, then repeat the exercise.

As you progress:

Level 2: Work up to lifting both arms at the same time, as shown in the picture.

Level 3: Use a heavier weight and alternate arms until you can lift the new weight comfortably with both arms.

Side arm raise



STRENGTH



BALANCE

This exercise will strengthen your shoulders and make lifting easier.

1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Hold hand weights straight down at your sides with your palms facing inward. Breathe in slowly.
4. Slowly breathe out as you raise both arms to the side and up to shoulder height, keeping your elbows slightly bent so you don't lock your joints.
5. Hold the position for one second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
7. Repeat 10–15 times.
8. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Do this exercise while standing.

Level 3: Use a heavier weight and alternate arms until you can lift the new weight comfortably with both arms.



After a few weeks of doing this exercise for your upper arm muscles, lifting those shopping bags onto the bench will be much easier.



STRENGTH



BALANCE

Arm curl using hand weights



1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold weights straight down at your sides with your palms facing forward. Breathe in slowly.
3. Breathe out as you slowly bend your elbows and lift weights toward chest. Keep elbows at your sides and your wrists straight.
4. Hold the position for one second.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
6. Keep your elbows slightly bent so you don't lock your joints.
7. Repeat 10–15 times.
8. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Use a heavier weight and alternate arms until you can lift the new weight comfortably with both arms.

Arm curl using a resistance band



STRENGTH

This variation of the arm curl exercise uses a resistance band instead of weights
(See *Working with a resistance band* on page 35).

1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Place the centre of the resistance band under both feet. Hold each end of the band with your palms facing inward. Keep elbows at your sides. Breathe in slowly.
3. Keep wrists straight and slowly breathe out as you bend your elbows and bring your hands toward your shoulders.
4. Hold position for one second, keeping your shoulders down.
5. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.
6. Repeat 10–15 times.
7. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Use a heavier strength band.



This exercise will strengthen your upper arms. If your shoulders aren't flexible enough to do this exercise, try the Chair dip on page 44.



STRENGTH



BALANCE

Elbow extension



1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold weight in one hand with your palm facing inward. Raise that arm toward ceiling.
3. Support this arm below the elbow with your other hand. Breathe in slowly.
4. Slowly bend your raised arm at the elbow and bring the weight toward your shoulder. Keep your elbow pointing towards the ceiling.
5. Hold position for one second.
6. Breathe out and slowly straighten your arm over your head. Be careful not to lock your elbow or swing your arm.
7. Repeat 10–15 times.
8. Repeat 10–15 times with other arm.
9. Repeat 10–15 more times with each arm.

As you progress:

Level 2: Do this exercise while standing as shown in the picture.

Level 3: Use a heavier weight.



Quick tip — If it's difficult for you to hold hand weights, try using wrist weights as pictured.

Chair dip



STRENGTH

This pushing motion will strengthen your arm muscles even if you are not able to lift yourself up off the chair.

1. Sit in a sturdy chair with armrests with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean slightly forward, keeping your back and shoulders straight.
3. Grasp the arms of the chair with your hands next to you. Breathe in slowly.
4. Breathe out and use your arms to push your body slowly off the chair. Be careful not to lock your elbows.
5. Hold position for one second.
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower yourself back down.
7. Repeat 10–15 times.
8. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times

As you progress:

Level 2: Using a stable bench seat or low table, sit on the edge with your hands on either side so your palms rest on the furniture and your fingers are over the edge, with your feet flat on the floor shoulder-width apart. Keeping your back straight, tightening your abdomen and leaving your hands in place, move your buttocks slightly forward off the furniture and bend your elbows to dip



your buttocks toward the floor. Keep your knees above your ankles and dip only to the point where your upper arms are parallel to the floor. Use your arms to push yourself up to the starting position.

Level 3: Do the progression Level 2 exercise, but with your legs out straight. Be careful not to lock your knees in front of you.

This exercise will strengthen your wrists, hands and forearms. It also will help ensure good form and prevent injury when you do upper-body strength exercises.



Wrist curl

STRENGTH



1. Rest your forearm on the arm of a sturdy chair with your wrist over the edge.
2. Hold weight with your palm facing upward.
3. Slowly bend your wrist up and down, without moving your forearm.
4. Repeat 10–15 times.
5. Repeat with other hand 10–15 times.
6. Repeat 10–15 more times with each hand.

As you progress:

Level 2: Use a heavier weight.

Back leg raise



STRENGTH



BALANCE

This exercise strengthens your buttocks and lower back.

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg straight back without bending your knee or pointing your toes. Try not to lean forward or arch your back. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for one second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10–15 times.
6. Repeat 10–15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10–15 more times with each leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try improving your balance by gradually decreasing your hand support and eventually doing the exercise with your eyes closed.

Level 3: You may want to add ankle weights.



This exercise strengthens hips, thighs and buttocks.



STRENGTH



BALANCE

Side leg raise



1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with feet slightly apart, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg out to the side. Keep your back straight and your toes facing forward. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for one second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10–15 times.
6. Repeat 10–15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10–15 more times with each leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try improving your balance by gradually decreasing your hand support and eventually doing the exercise with your eyes closed.

Level 3: You may want to add ankle weights as shown in the picture.

Chair stand



STRENGTH

This exercise strengthens your abdomen and thighs, which will make it easier to get in and out of the car.

1. Sit toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair with knees bent and feet flat on floor, shoulder-width apart. Breathe in.
2. Breathe out and extend your arms so they are parallel to the floor as you slowly stand up, keeping your heels on the ground and legs slightly bent.
3. Breathe in as you slowly sit down.
4. Repeat 10–15 times.
5. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.

(If you find this difficult, place a cushion or piece of foam on the chair to raise the sitting height).

As you progress:

Level 2: Add hand weights or increase the distance from standing to sitting by removing the chair altogether and doing a squat by lowering your buttocks toward the floor and standing up again.



This exercise will make walking and climbing stairs easier.



STRENGTH



BALANCE

Knee curl



1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out as you slowly bring your heel up toward your buttocks as far as possible. Bend only from your knee, keep your hips still, your knees close together and don't point your toe. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for one second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your foot to the floor, keeping a slight bend in both legs.
5. Repeat 10–15 times.
6. Repeat 10–15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10–15 more times with each leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try improving your balance by gradually decreasing your hand support and eventually doing the exercise with your eyes closed.

Level 3: Add ankle weights.



balance



Make it a habit

Lian, age 68, has found that regular Tai Chi classes have improved her balance and flexibility:

'Early every morning, I join a group of my neighbours and we practise Tai Chi for about an hour. We start out with a gentle warm-up and breathing exercises. Then our teacher shows us how to do certain poses and leads us step by step through the slow, flowing movements. We end with cooling-down exercises. This exercise routine has boosted my confidence and reduced my fear of falling. It also gets me out of the house and keeps my arthritis under control.'

Improving your balance

A simple fall can cause a serious fracture of the arm, hand, ankle or hip. Balance exercises can help you prevent falls and avoid the disability that may result from falling.

How much, how often?

You can do the balance exercises in this section as often as you like as part of your 30-minutes of physical activity each day. They overlap with the lower-body strength exercises, which can also improve your balance. Use the strength and balance daily record in your workbook to keep track of your balance exercises.

About balance exercises

- Having a sturdy chair, wall or a person



nearby to hold on to will help you work on your balance safely.

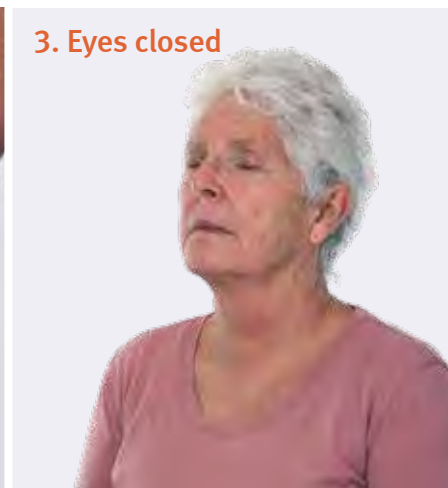
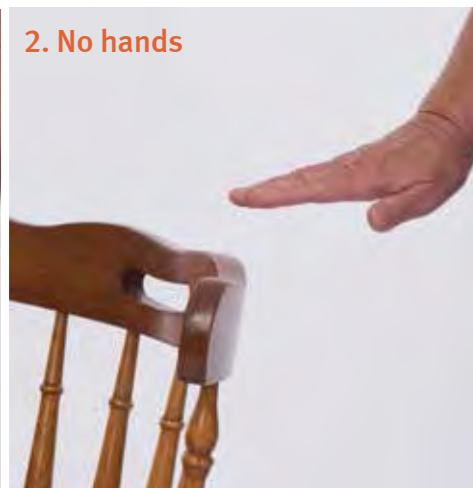
- You can do exercises to improve your balance almost anytime, anywhere and as often as you like, as long as you have something sturdy nearby to hold on to if you become unsteady.

Progressing

These exercises can improve your balance even more if you challenge yourself and modify them as you progress. Start by holding on to a sturdy chair with both hands for support. To challenge yourself, try holding on to the chair with only one hand. With time (as pictured below), you can:

1. try holding on with only one finger
2. try without holding on
3. if you are steady on your feet, try doing the exercise with your eyes closed.

Progressing



Making it real !

You're walking in the neighbourhood and you hear a bicycle bell behind you. Knowing you can turn around quickly and move out of the way without losing your balance is a great feeling!

Balance exercises

1. Stand on one foot p23
2. Toe stand p24
3. Heel-to-toe walk p25
4. Balance walk p26

Stand on one foot



BALANCE

You can do this exercise while brushing your teeth or standing in line at the shops.

1. Stand on one foot behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance, the leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
2. Hold position for up to 10 seconds.
3. Repeat 10–15 times.
4. Repeat 10–15 times with other leg.
5. Repeat 10–15 more times with each leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Gradually decrease your hand support and eventually do the exercise with your eyes closed.

Level 3: Stand on foam or a similar soft, unstable surface. Ensure you hold on to a support when starting this progression level.



This exercise will make walking easier by strengthening your calves and ankles, as well as helping to improve your balance.

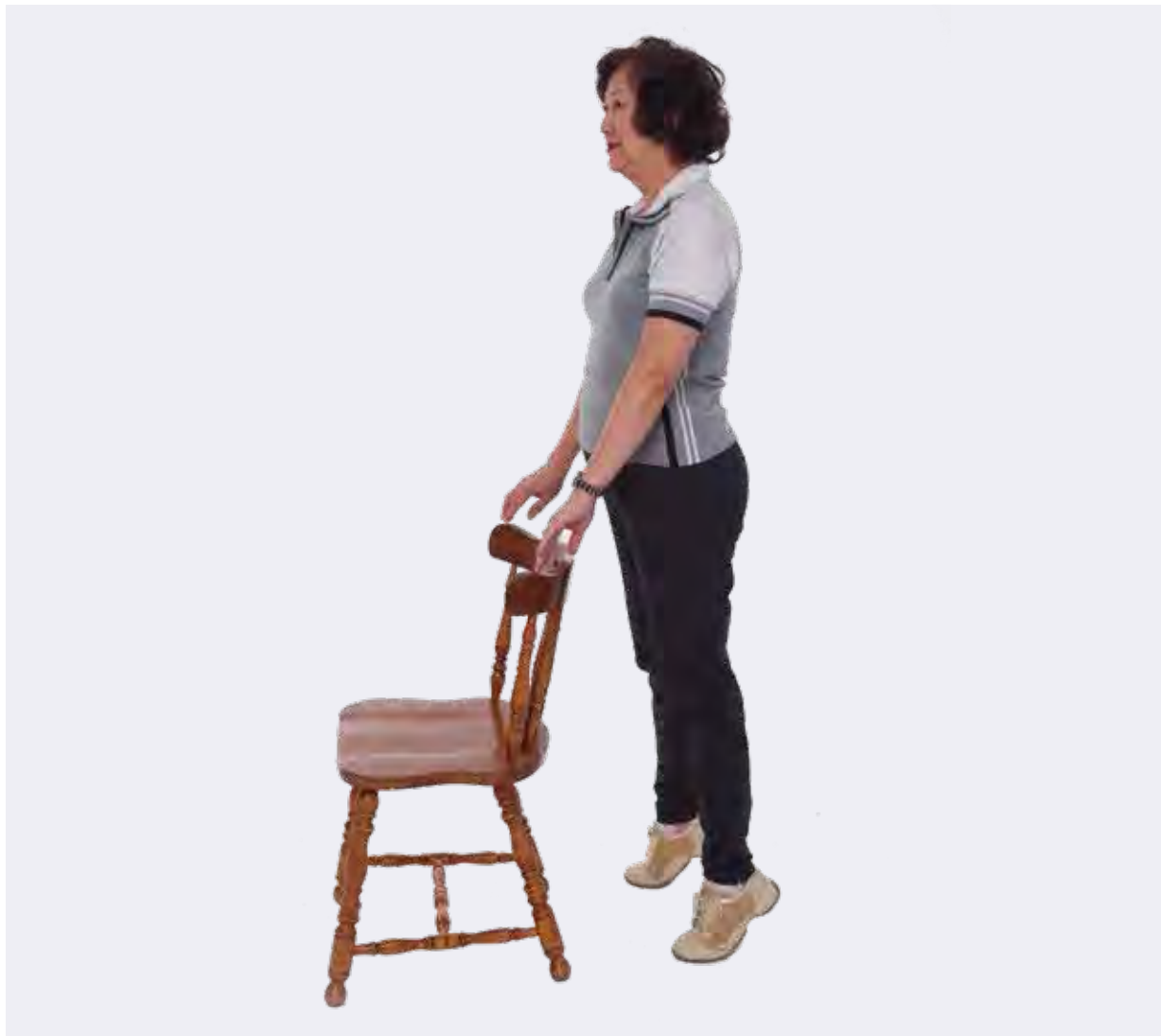


BALANCE



STRENGTH

Toe stand



1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, feet shoulder-width apart, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly stand on tiptoes, as high as possible.
3. Hold position for one second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower heels to the floor.
5. Repeat 10–15 times.
6. Rest, then repeat 10–15 more times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try improving your balance by gradually decreasing your hand support and eventually doing the exercise with your eyes closed. You may want to add hand weights.

Level 3: Do the exercise standing on one leg at a time. Add hand weights.

Heel-to-toe walk



BALANCE

Having good balance is important for many everyday activities, such as walking in the park and going up and down stairs. Do this exercise near a wall so you can steady yourself if you need to.

1. Position the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of the other foot. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch. If you are having difficulty, leave a greater space between your toe and heel and build up to closing the gap.
2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.
3. Take a step. Put your heel just in front of the toe of your other foot.
4. Repeat for 20 steps.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try the exercise backwards.

Level 3: Try the exercise with your eyes closed.



Good balance helps you walk safely and avoid tripping and falling over objects in your way.
Do this exercise near a wall so you can steady yourself if you need to.



Balance walk

BALANCE



1. Raise arms to sides at shoulder height.
2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.
3. Walk in a straight line with one foot directly in front of the other.
4. As you walk, lift your back leg. Pause for one second before stepping forward.
5. Repeat for 20 steps, alternating legs.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try looking from side to side as you walk, but skip this step if you have inner-ear problems.

Try the exercise backwards.

Level 3: Try the exercise with your eyes closed.

flexibility



Improving your flexibility

Stretching or flexibility exercises are an important part of your physical activity program. They give you more freedom of movement for your physical and everyday activities, such as getting dressed and reaching objects on a shelf. Stretching exercises can improve your flexibility, but will not improve your endurance or strength.

How much, how often?

- Flexibility exercises can be included in your physical activity routine every day. Do each stretching exercise three to five times at each session.
- Always warm up before stretching exercises. Stretch after endurance or strength exercises. If you are doing only stretching exercises, warm up with a few minutes of easy walking first. Stretching your muscles before they are warmed up may result in injury.
- Use the flexibility daily record in your workbook to keep track of your flexibility exercises.



Make it happen

Grace, age 66, has found that stretching exercises have become an important addition to her daily physical activity:

'I grew up on a farm and continued farming after I married. So I was used to hard work and plenty of physical activity. When my son and his family took over running the farm, I needed to find a way to stay active and healthy. Now I begin most mornings with a walk and stretches. Good thing, too! The stretching keeps me limber and the walking gives me plenty of stamina to keep up with my seven grandchildren. Physical activity helps me stay active in their lives and that makes it all worthwhile.'



About floor exercises

FLEXIBILITY

To get down on the floor safely:

1. Stand facing the seat of a sturdy chair.
2. Put your hands on the seat and lower yourself down on one knee. Use a mat or towel to cushion your knee.
3. Bring the other knee down.
4. Put your left hand on the floor. Leaning on your hand, slowly bring your left hip to the floor. Put your right hand on the floor next to your left hand to steady yourself, if needed (see picture p58).
5. You should now be sitting with your weight on your left hip.
6. Straighten your legs.
7. Bend your left elbow until your weight is resting on it. Using your right hand as needed for support, straighten your left arm. You should now be lying on your left side.
8. Roll on to your back.



Quick tip

You don't have to use your left side. You can use your right side if you prefer.

Quick tips



- Use the chair to help you push up. Do not pull on furniture as you may pull it on to yourself.
- If you have trouble getting down on to or up from the floor by yourself, try using the buddy system. Find someone who will be able to help you. Knowing how to use a chair to get down on the floor and get back up again may also be helpful.
- If it is not possible for you to get on to the floor, many of these exercises can be done in bed.



FLEXIBILITY

To get up from the floor safely:

1. Roll on to your left side.
2. Place your right hand on the floor at about the level of your ribs and use it to push your shoulders off the floor. Use your left hand to help lift you up, as needed.
3. You should now be sitting with your weight on your left hip.
4. Roll forward, on to your knees, leaning on your hands for support.
5. Reach up and lean your hands on the seat of a sturdy chair.
6. Lift one of your knees so that one leg is bent, foot flat on the floor (see picture p57).
7. Leaning your hands on the seat of the chair for support, push up with your arms and legs and pivot your buttocks around on to the chair.



About flexibility exercises

Talk with your doctor if you are unsure about a particular exercise. **If you have hip, back or shoulder problems or have had hip or back surgery, talk with your health professional before doing the stretching exercises in this chapter.**

How far?

- Stretching may feel slightly uncomfortable. A mild pulling feeling is normal.
- You are stretching too far if you feel sharp or stabbing pain, or joint pain while doing the stretch or even the next day. Reduce the stretch so that it doesn't hurt.

Stretching

- Slowly stretch into the desired position, as far as possible without pain, and hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds. Relax, breathe, then repeat, trying to stretch further.
- Maintain good posture and keep your abdominal and back muscles strong. Avoid arching your back.
- Never 'bounce' into a stretch. Make slow, steady movements instead. Jerking into position can cause muscles to tighten, possibly causing injury.
- Avoid 'locking' your joints. Straighten your arms and legs when you stretch them, but don't hold them tightly in a straight position. Your joints should always be slightly bent while stretching.

Breathing

- Always remember to breathe normally while holding a stretch.

Progressing

You can progress in your stretching exercises. As you become more flexible, try reaching further (but not so far that it hurts) or hold positions for longer.

Flexibility exercises

- Back stretch p31
- Back twist p32
- Shoulder stretch p33
- Shoulder/Chest stretch p34
- Shoulder/Upper arm stretch p35
- Upper body stretch p36
- Neck stretch p37
- Lower back stretch p38
- Back of leg stretch p39
- Thigh stretch p40
- Inner thigh stretch p41
- Calf stretch p42
- Buddy stretch p43

Making it real !

How easy is it for you to turn around in the car and look behind you before backing out of a parking space? What about bending down to tie your shoes? Flexibility exercises will help you do both more easily.



Back stretch



FLEXIBILITY

This exercise stretches your back muscles.

1. Sit securely toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly bend forward from your hips. Keep your back and neck straight so you are looking down at the floor.
3. Slightly relax your neck and lower your chin. Slowly bend further forward and slide your hands down the back of your legs toward your ankles. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
4. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
5. Straighten up slowly all the way to the starting position.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Bend as far forward as you can and eventually touch your heels.

Level 3: Build up to touching your toes while standing, keeping your back straight and knees slightly bent.



This exercise will help you do activities that require you to twist or turn to look behind you, such as backing out of a parking space or swinging a golf club.



Back twist

FLEXIBILITY



1. Sit up toward the front of a sturdy chair with armrests. Stay as straight as possible. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly twist to the left from your waist without moving your hips. Turn your head to the left. Lift your left hand and hold on to the left arm of the chair. Place your right hand on the outside of your left thigh. Twist further, if possible.
3. Hold the position for 10 to 30 seconds.
4. Slowly return to face forward.
5. Repeat on the right side.
6. Repeat at least three to five more times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try lifting your left arm and resting it comfortably on the back of the chair. Hold on to the left armrest with your right arm. Repeat on right side.

Shoulder stretch



FLEXIBILITY

This exercise is good for your shoulders and upper back muscles.

1. Sit in a sturdy, armless chair with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold arms in front of you at shoulder height, palms facing down and hands side by side.
3. Relax your shoulders, keep your upper body still and reach forward with your hands. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
4. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
5. Sit back up.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.

As you progress:

Level 2: With your arms out in front, cross your arms and interlace your fingers as shown in the small picture.

Level 3: Bend forward keeping your back straight, cross your arms and grasp behind your knees.



This exercise to stretch your shoulder and chest muscles will help improve your posture.



Shoulder/chest stretch

FLEXIBILITY



As an alternative

Stand or sit in a sturdy chair, hold your arms out to the side at shoulder height with palms facing forward, slowly move your arms back while squeezing your shoulder blades together and hold as above.

1. Stand back against a wall, feet shoulder-width apart and arms at shoulder height.
2. Bend your elbows so your fingertips point toward the ceiling and touch the wall behind you. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort, and stop immediately if you feel sharp pain.
3. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
4. Let your arms slowly roll forward, remaining bent at the elbows, to point toward the floor and touch the wall again, if possible. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort.
5. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
6. Alternate pointing your fingertips above your head, then toward the floor.
7. Repeat at least three to five times.

Shoulder/upper arm stretch



FLEXIBILITY



BALANCE

This exercise to increase flexibility in your shoulders and upper arms will help make it easier to reach for your seatbelt.

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold one end of a towel in your right hand.
3. Raise and bend your right arm to drape the towel down your back. Keep your right arm in this position and continue holding on to the towel.
4. Reach behind your lower back and grasp the towel with your left hand.
5. To stretch your right shoulder, pull the towel down with your left hand. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort in your right shoulder.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.
7. Reverse positions and repeat at least three to five times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try gradually decreasing the distance between your top and bottom hands.

Level 3: Try completing the exercise without a towel, eventually making the fingertips of your two hands touch.



This exercise increases the flexibility of your arms, chest and shoulders and will help you reach items on the upper shelves of your wardrobe or kitchen cupboard.



Upper body stretch

FLEXIBILITY



1. Stand facing a wall slightly further than arm's length from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean your body forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Keeping your back straight, slowly walk your hands up the wall until your arms are above your head.
4. Hold your arms overhead for about 10 to 30 seconds.
5. Slowly walk your hands back down.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Gradually reach higher up the wall.

Neck stretch



FLEXIBILITY

This easy stretch can help relieve tension in your neck. Try to stretch after strength training and during any activity that makes you feel stiff, such as sitting at a desk.

1. You can do this stretch while standing or sitting in a sturdy chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart, with hands clasped behind your back.
3. Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel a slight stretch. Be careful not to tip or tilt your head forward or backward, but hold it in a comfortable position.
4. Hold the position for 10 to 30 seconds.
5. Turn your head to the left and hold the position for 10 to 30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.



This exercise stretches the muscles of your lower back.



Lower back stretch

FLEXIBILITY



1. Lie on your back with your legs together, knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Try to keep both arms and shoulders flat on the floor throughout the stretch.
2. Keeping knees bent and together, slowly lower both legs to one side as far as you comfortably can, keeping your head still.
3. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
4. Bring legs back up slowly and repeat toward other side.
5. Continue alternating sides for at least three to five times on each side.

As you progress:

Level 2: Gently move your head to the opposite side as your legs to increase the stretch.

Level 3: Use your hand to gently push your knees closer to the ground.

Back of leg stretch



FLEXIBILITY

This exercise stretches the muscles in the back of your legs.

Floor

1. Lie on your back with left knee bent and left foot flat on the floor.
2. Raise right leg, keeping knee slightly bent.
3. Reach up and grasp right leg with both hands. Keep head and shoulders flat on the floor. If you can't reach your leg, loop a resistance band, belt or towel over your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull right leg toward your body until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg.
5. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.
7. Repeat at least three to five times with left leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try to work up to reaching your foot.



Chair/bench

1. Sit sideways on a bench seat or other hard surface, such as two chairs placed together.
2. Keeping your back straight, stretch one leg out on the bench, toes pointing up.
3. Keep your other foot flat on the floor.
4. If you feel a stretch at this point, hold position for 10–30 seconds.
5. If you don't feel a stretch, lean forward from hips (not waist) sliding your arm down towards your foot until you feel stretching in the leg on the bench.
6. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
7. Repeat at least three to five times.
8. Repeat at least three to five times with your other leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try to work up to reaching your foot.



This exercise stretches your thigh muscles.



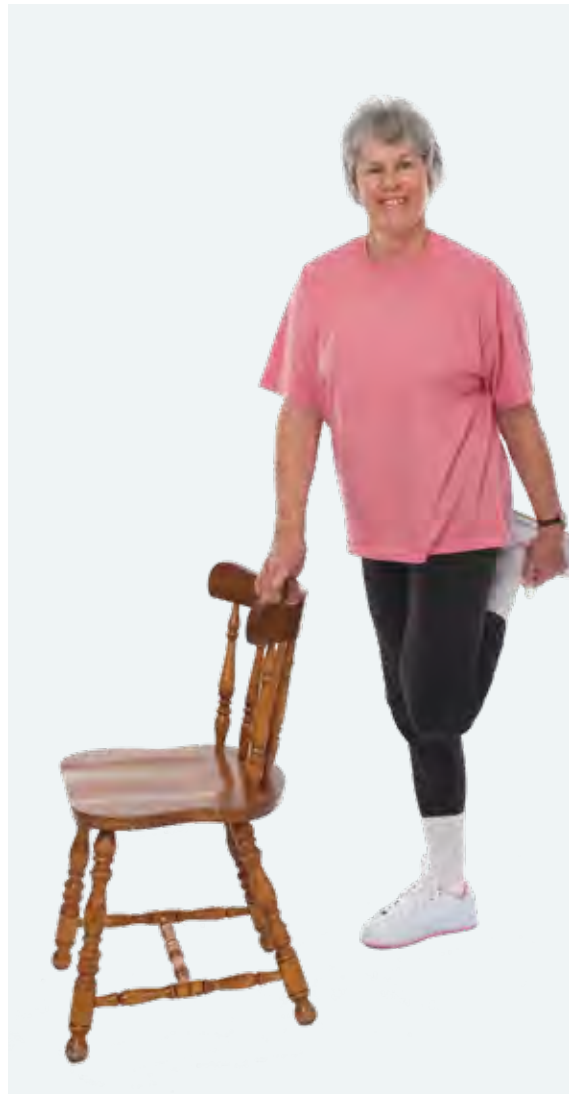
FLEXIBILITY BALANCE

Thigh stretch



Floor

1. Lie on your side with legs straight and knees together.
2. Rest your head on your arm.
3. Bend your top knee and reach back and grab the top of your foot. If you can't reach your foot, loop a resistance band, belt or towel over your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.
7. Repeat at least three to five times with your other leg.



Standing

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and your legs straight, but knees slightly bent.
2. Hold on to the chair for balance with your right hand.
3. Bend your left leg back and grab your foot in your left hand. Keep your knees together and your back straight. If you are unable to reach your foot use a rolled up towel looped around your foot and held in each hand.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least three to five times.
7. Repeat at least three to five times with your right leg, holding it with your right hand.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try improving your balance by gradually reducing your hand support.

Inner thigh stretch



FLEXIBILITY

This exercise will stretch your groin and inner thigh muscles.

1. Lie on your back with your legs together, knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Try to keep both shoulders on the floor throughout the stretch.
2. Slowly lower one knee as far as you comfortably can. Try not to move the other leg as you keep your feet close together and your hips and back flat on the floor.
3. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
4. Bring knee back up slowly.
5. Repeat at least three to five times.
6. Repeat at least three to five times with your other leg.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try this exercise in a sitting position, with the soles of your feet touching and in as close to your body as possible. Gently lower both knees outwards toward the floor as far as you comfortable can.

Level 3: Gently push down on your knees with your hands to increase the stretch.



Because many people have tight calf muscles, it's important to stretch them.



Calf stretch

FLEXIBILITY



1. Stand facing a wall slightly further than arm's length from the wall, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Step forward with right leg and bend right knee. Keeping both feet flat on the floor, bend left knee slightly until you feel a stretch in your left calf muscle. It shouldn't feel uncomfortable. If you don't feel a stretch, bend your right knee until you do.
4. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds, and then return to starting position.
5. Repeat with left leg.
6. Continue alternating legs for at least three to five times on each leg.

Buddy stretch



FLEXIBILITY

This is a good overall stretch that's fun to do with a exercise buddy. It stretches your shoulders, arms, back and legs. (See *Working with a resistance band* on page 35).

1. Sit on the floor facing your buddy and place your feet against your partner's feet.
2. Both of you should grab one end of a resistance band or towel. Depending on each person's flexibility, you may need to loop two bands or towels together.
3. Slowly pull the band or towel so that your buddy bends forward and you lean backward.
4. Hold position for 10 to 30 seconds.
5. Slowly return to starting position.
6. Now it's your buddy's turn to pull the band or towel so that you bend forward and your buddy leans backward. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds, and then return to starting position.
7. Repeat at least three to five times.

As you progress:

Level 2: Try holding the band so that your hands are closer to your buddy's, or try using a heavier strength band.

Level 3: Build up to reaching out and holding hands with your buddy during the stretch.

