

# Preventing Falls

## **Strength and balance exercises for healthy ageing**

Exercise should be comfortable and fun. To get the most out of your home exercise book, join a class for older people to check your exercises with a qualified instructor.

# Safety

Ensure that the chair you use is sturdy and stable.

Wear comfortable clothes and supportive footwear.

Prepare a space and have your exercise band ready before you start.

Exercise bands can be purchased from sports stores.

In the meantime you can use tea-towels or tights instead.

Before you start exercising, it is recommended that you speak to your doctor. While exercising, if you experience chest pain, dizziness or severe shortness of breath, *stop immediately* and contact your GP.

If you experience pain in your joints or muscles, stop, check your position and try again. If the pain persists seek medical advice.

And remember: where there is pain and strain – there is no gain.

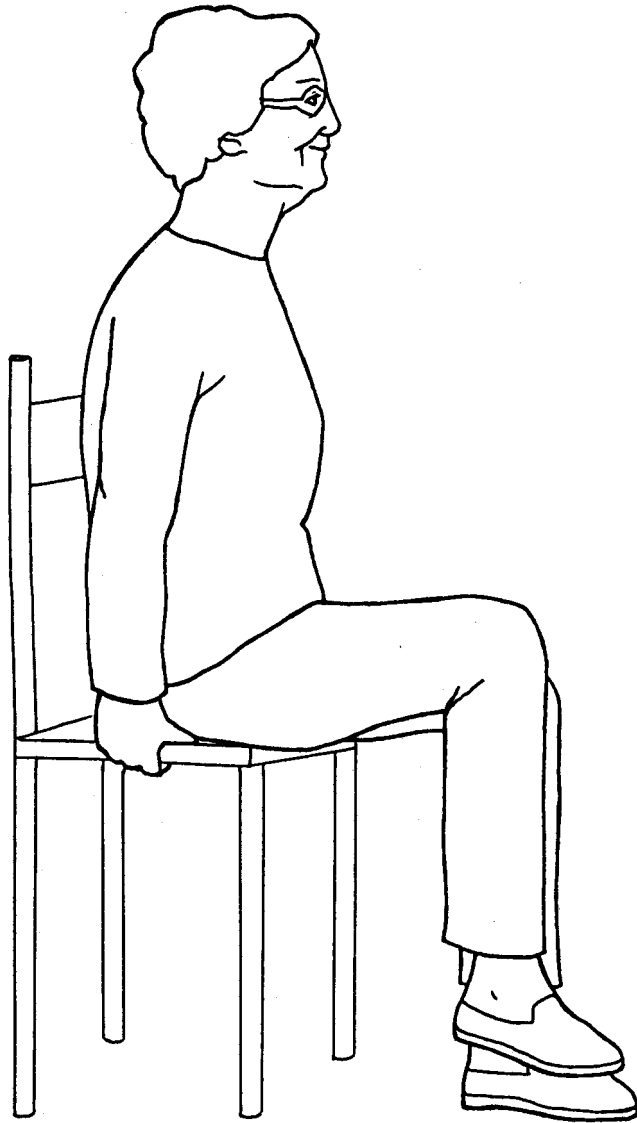
# **Warm-up exercises**

Always begin with a warm-up to prepare your body for the main exercises.

There are eight warm-up exercises in this section.

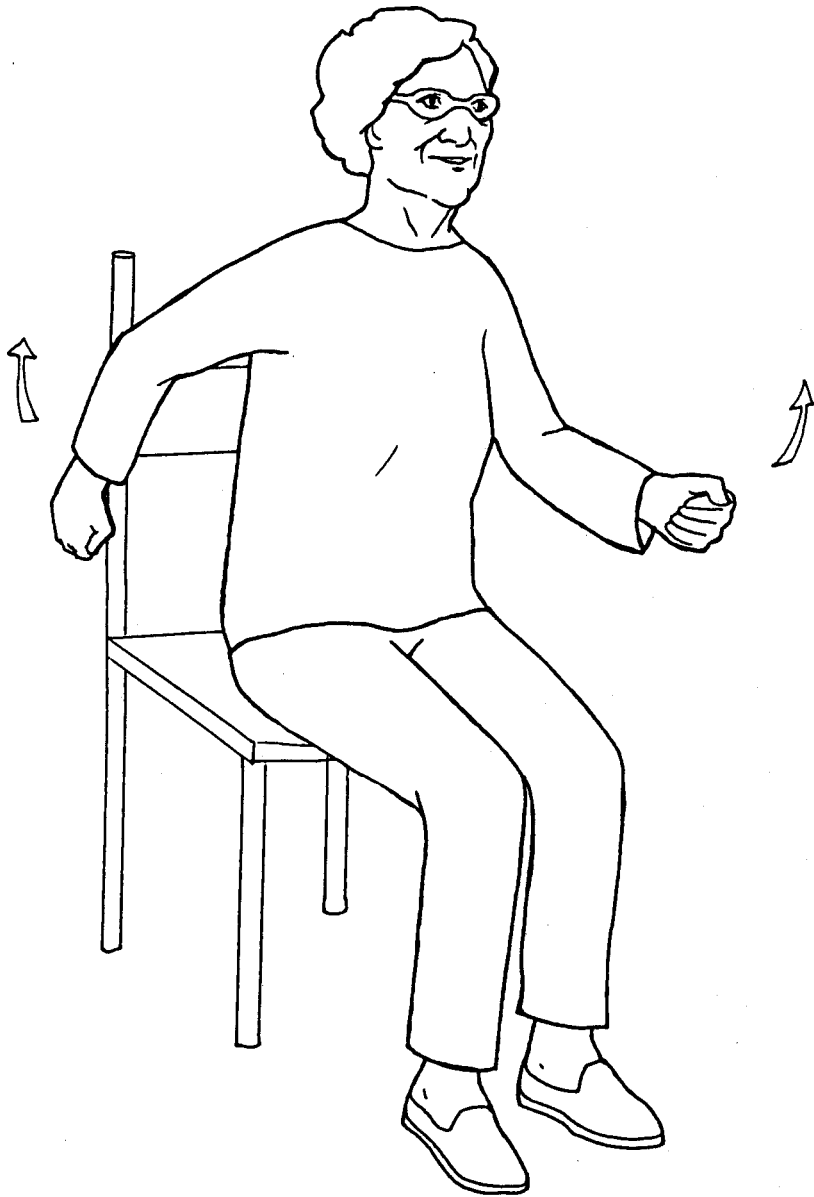
Complete *all* of the following:

# 1 Chair march



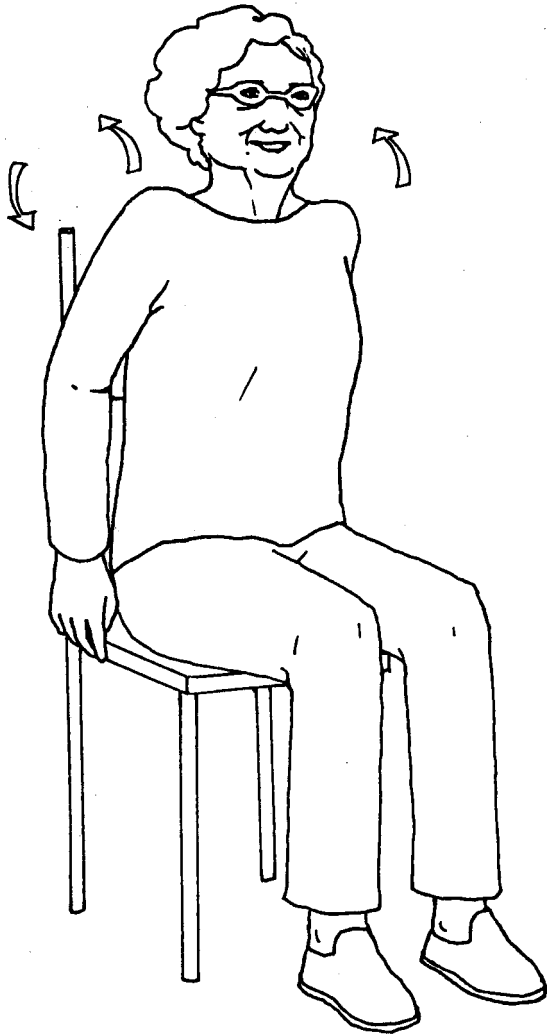
- Sit tall
- Hold the sides of the chair
- Alternately lift your feet and place them down *with control*
- Build to a rhythm that is comfortable for you
- Continue for 30 seconds

## **2** Arm swings



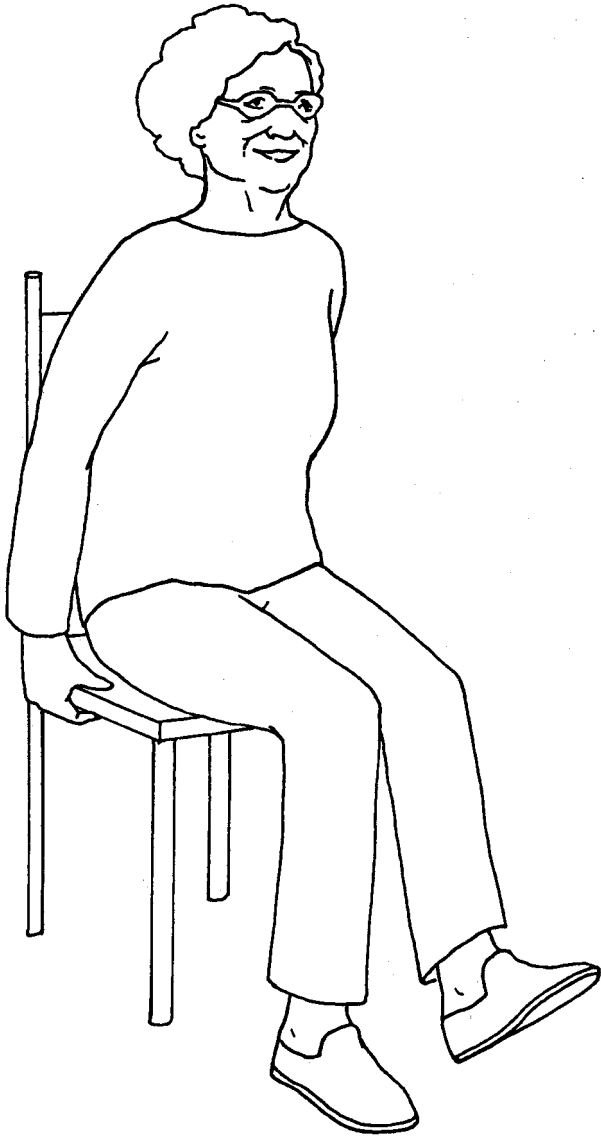
- Sit tall away from the chair back
- Place your feet flat on the floor below your knees
- Bend your elbows and swing your arms from the shoulder
- Build to a rhythm that is comfortable for you
- Continue for 30 seconds

### **3** Shoulder circles



- Sit tall with your arms at your sides
- Lift both shoulders up to your ears, draw them back, then press them down
- Repeat slowly 5 times

## **4** Ankle loosener

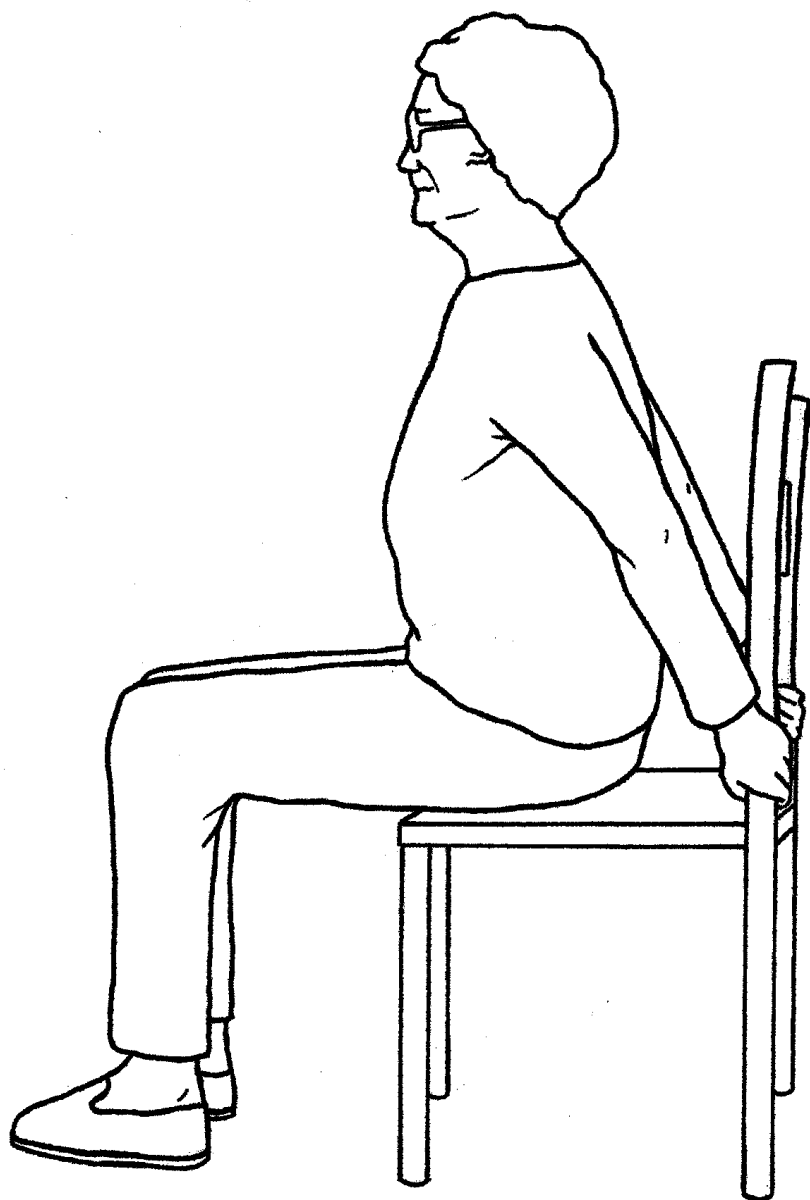


- Sit tall away from the chair back
- Hold the sides of the chair
- Place the heel of one foot on the floor, then lift it and put the toes down on the same spot
- Repeat 5 times on each leg

## 5 Spine twists



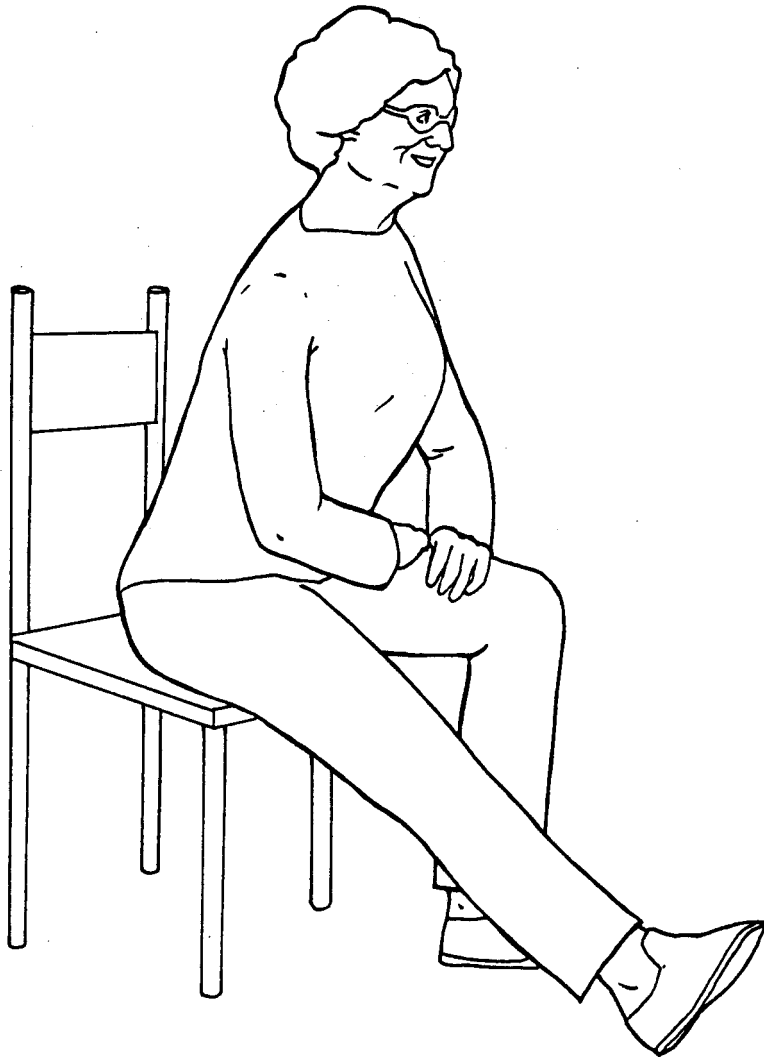
- Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor
- Place your right hand on your left knee and your left hand behind you on the chair back or side of the chair
- Sit very tall, then, *with control*, turn your upper body and head towards your left arm
- Repeat on the opposite side
- Repeat 5 times



## **6** Chest stretch

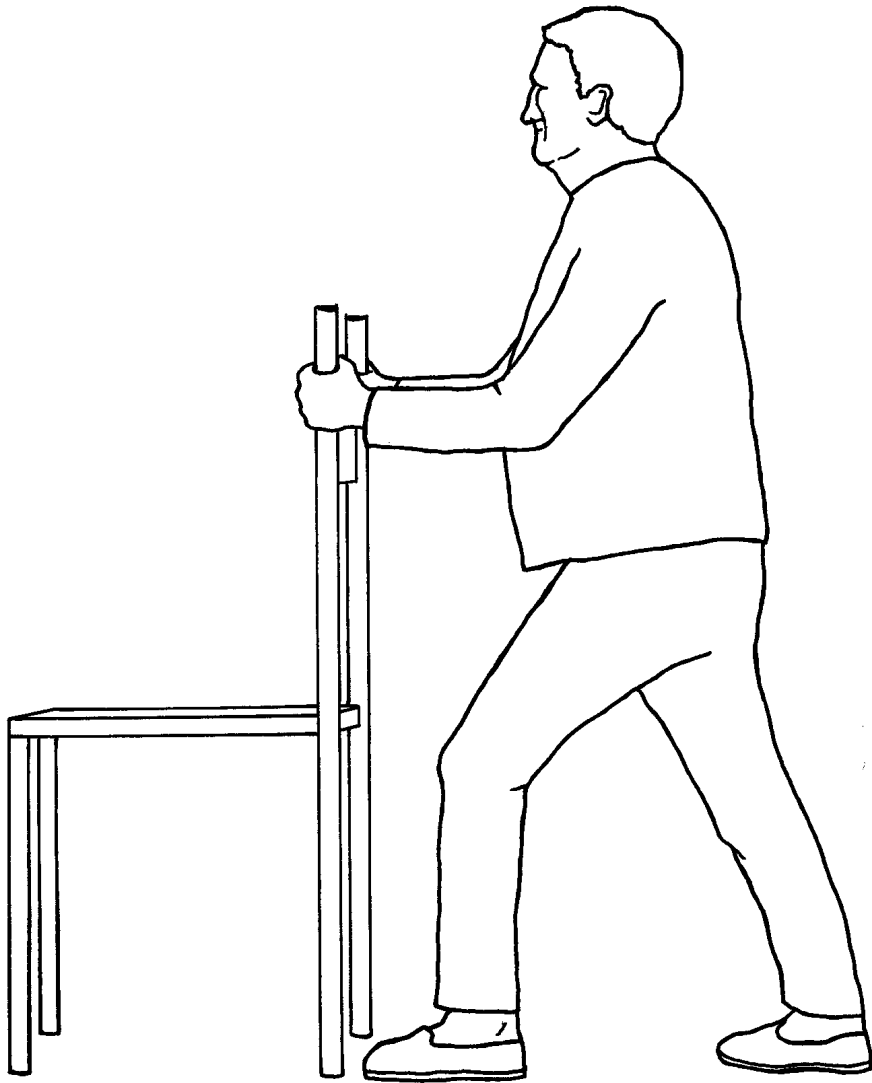
- Sit tall away from the chair back
- Reach behind with both arms and hold the chair back
- Press your chest forwards and upwards until you feel the stretch across your chest
- Hold for 8 seconds

## **7** Back of thigh stretch



- Move your bottom to the front of the chair
- Place your right foot flat on the floor, then straighten your left leg out in front with your heel on the floor
- Place both hands on the right thigh, then sit tall
- Lean forwards and upwards until you feel the stretch in the back of your left thigh
- Hold for 8 seconds
- Repeat on your other leg

## **8** Calf stretch



- Stand behind the chair holding the chair back
- Step back with one leg checking that both feet are pointing forward
- Now press the heel of the back foot into the floor until you feel the stretch in your calf
- Hold for 8 seconds
- Repeat on your other leg

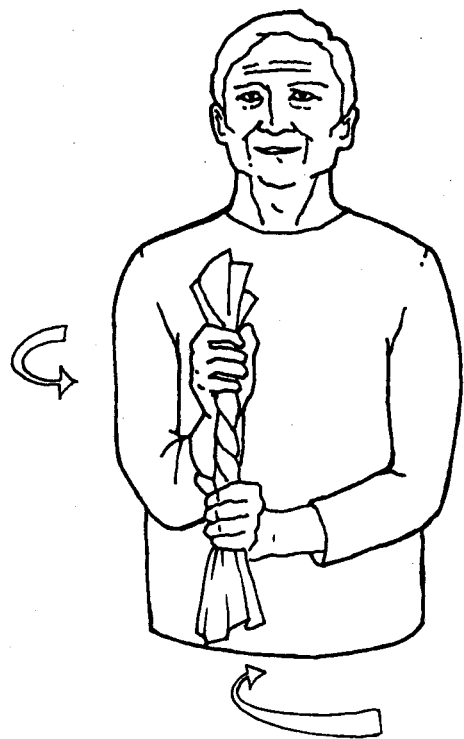
# **Main exercises**

There are ten exercises in this section.

Start by choosing three each time you use this book. Try to select different exercises each time so that you have done them all by the end of the week.

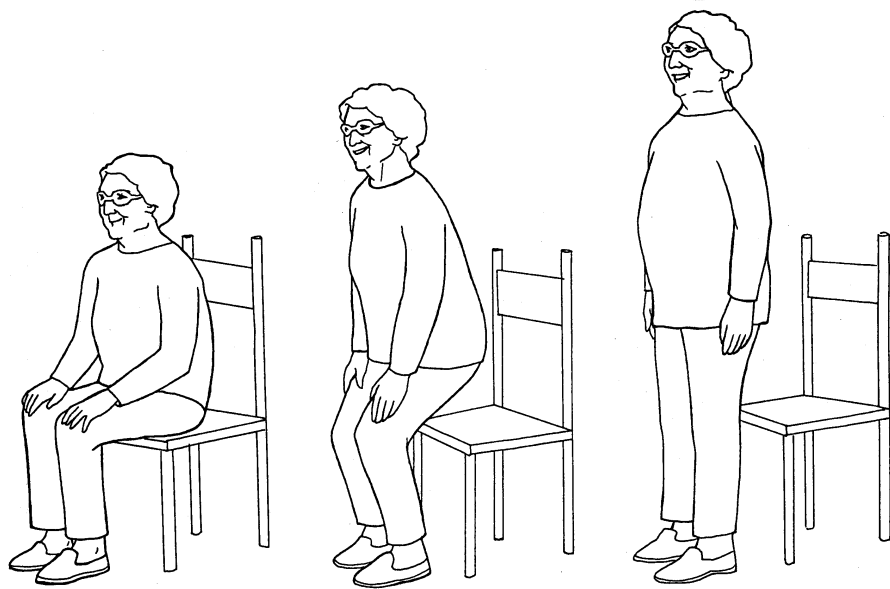
Progress by building up gradually until you can complete all the exercises in one go. Aim to do them three times a week.

**The first five exercises are to help improve bone and muscle strength**



# 1 Wrist strengthener

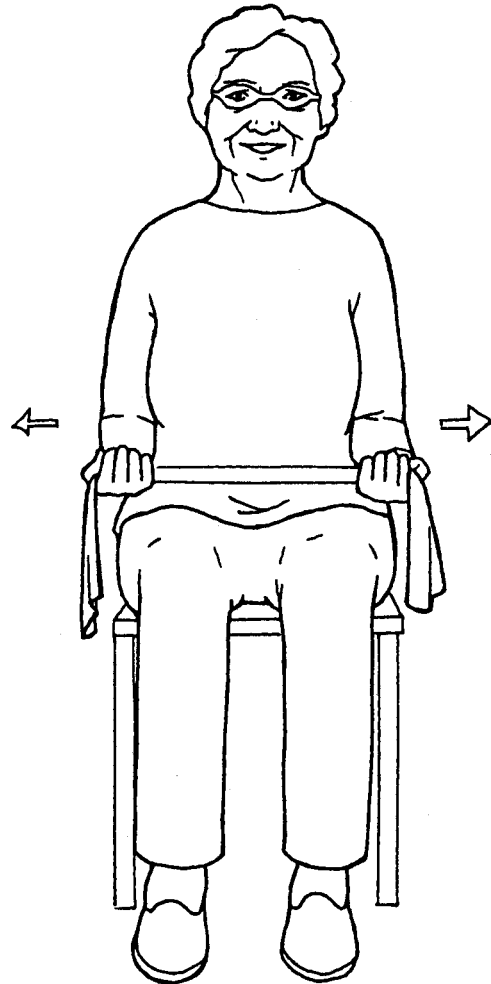
- Fold or roll the band (or towel/tights)
- Holding it with both hands, squeeze hard, then twist by bringing your elbows close to your body
- Hold for a slow count of 5 (and count out loud to ensure you don't hold your breath)
- Repeat 8 times



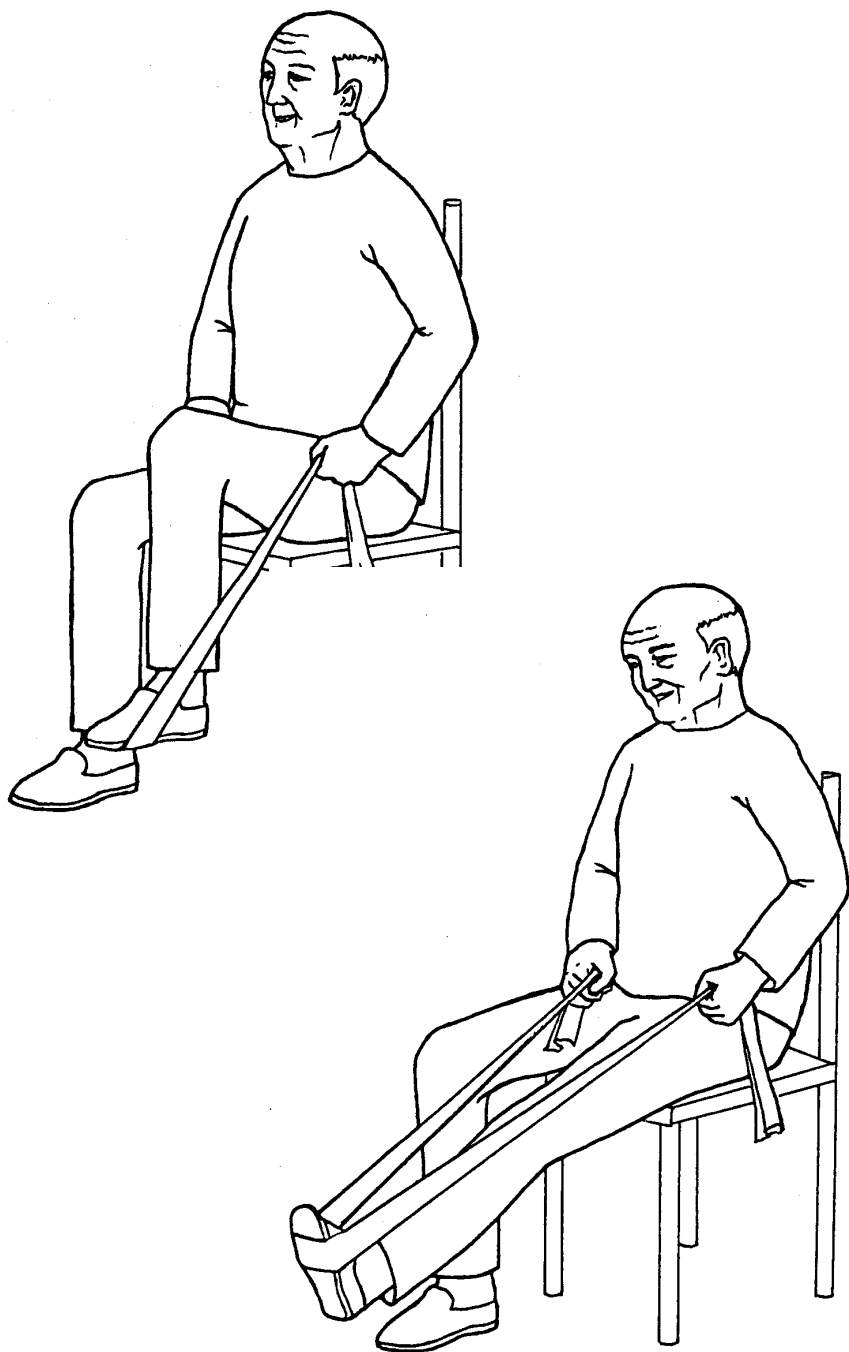
## 2 Sit to stand

- Sit tall near the front of the chair
- Place your feet slightly behind your knees
- Lean slightly forwards
- Stand up (using your hands on the chair for support if needed. Progress to no hands over time)
- Step back until your legs touch the chair, then stand tall, bend your knees and *slowly* lower your bottom back into the chair
- Repeat 10 times

### 3 Upper back strengthener



- Hold the band with your palms facing up and wrists firm and straight
- Pull your hands apart, then draw the band towards your hips, squeeze your shoulder blades together
- Hold for a slow count of 5 (and count out loud to keep breathing)
- Then release
- Repeat 6 times

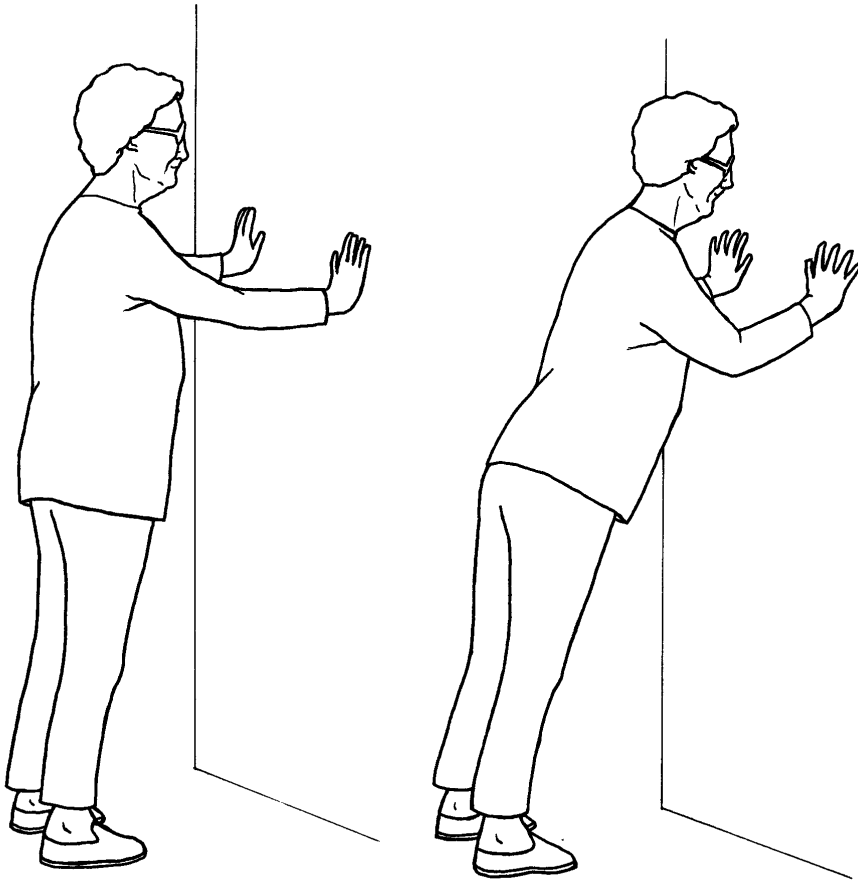


## 4 Thigh strengthener

- Place the band under the ball of one foot
- Sit tall, lift the knee a few inches, then pull your hands towards your hips and hold
- Now straighten your knee by pushing your foot firmly downwards against the band
- Hold for a slow count of 5 (count out loud to keep breathing)
- Bend the knee and release the arms
- Repeat 6 times then change legs!

## 5 Wall press-up

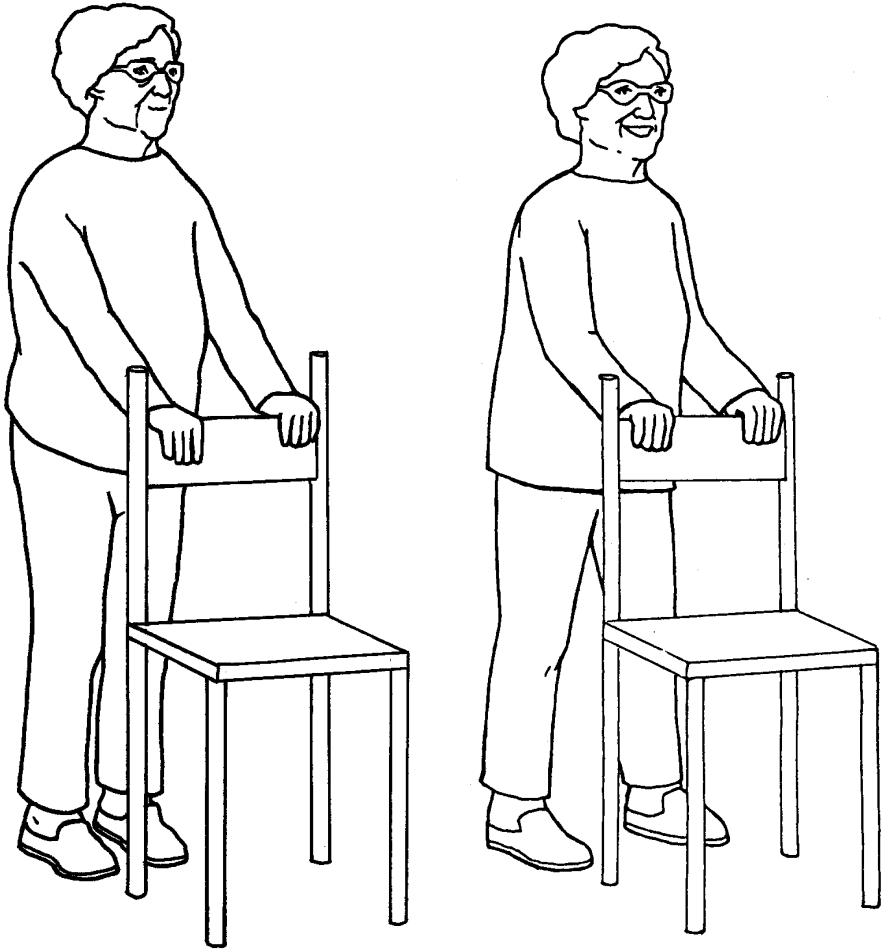
- Stand at arms length from wall
- Place your hands on the wall at chest height, fingers upwards
- Keeping your back straight and tummy tight, bend your elbows lowering your body *with control* towards the wall
- Press back to the start position
- Repeat 8 times



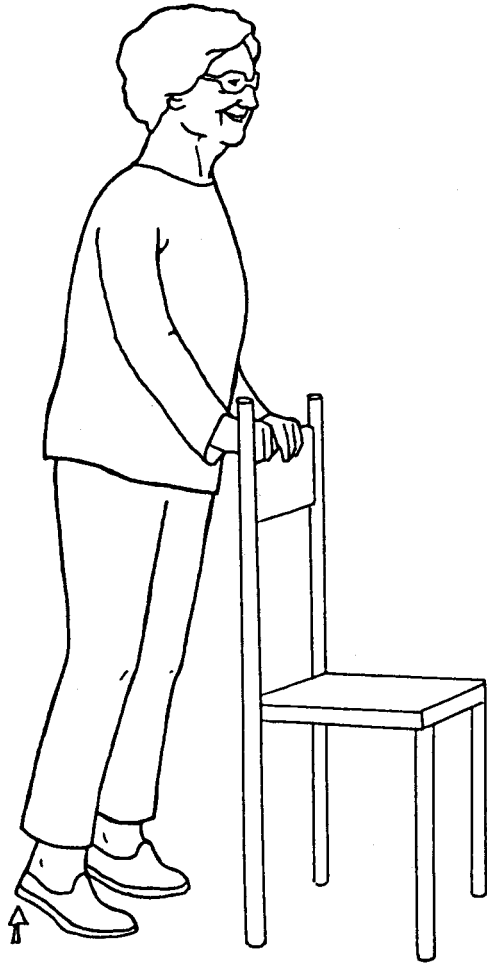
**The following five exercises are to  
help improve your balance**

## 6 Side steps

- Stand tall holding the chair
- Take a step from side to side
- When confident try holding the chair with only one hand
- Continue for 30 seconds
- Now try 2 steps to the side and back for 30 seconds

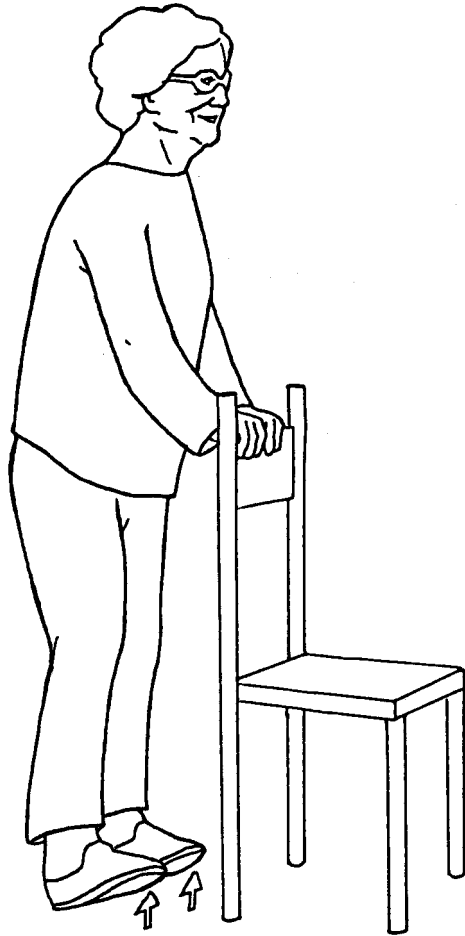


## 7 Heel raises



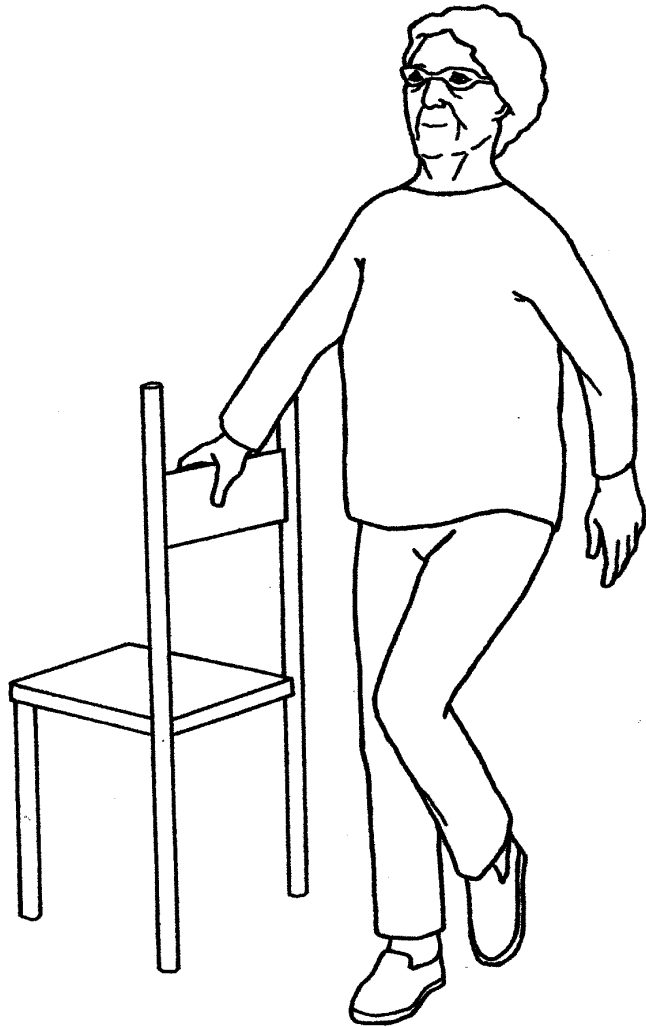
- Stand tall holding a sturdy table, chair or even the sink!
- Raise your heels taking your weight over the big toe and second toe
- Hold for a second
- Lower your heels to the floor *with control*
- Repeat 10 times

## 8 Toe raises

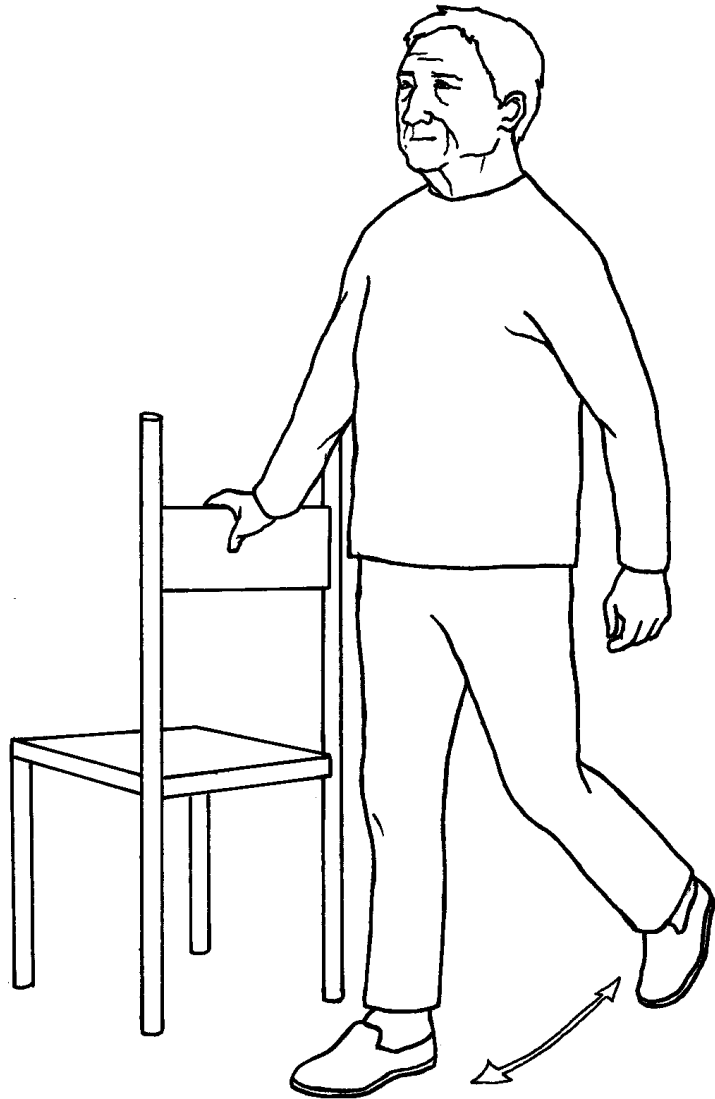


- Stand tall holding a sturdy table, chair or even the sink!
- Raise your toes taking your weight back onto your heels and without sticking your bottom out
- Hold for a second
- Lower your toes to the floor *with control*
- Repeat 10 times

## 9 Marching



- Stand to the side of the chair holding on with one hand
- Stand tall
- March on the spot swinging your free arm
- Keep marching for 30 seconds
- Turn slowly around then repeat using the other arm
- Repeat 3 times



## 10 Leg swings

- Stand to the side of the chair holding on with one hand
- Stand tall
- Swing the leg furthest away for the chair forwards and back *with control*
- Perform 10 swings
- Turn slowly to repeat on your other leg

# Ending the session

Finish by chair marching at a relaxed pace for 1–2 minutes (page 3), then repeat the last three stretches from the warm-up:

Chest stretch (page 8)

Back of thigh stretch (page 9)

Calf stretch (page 10)

Well done! You have completed your exercises for today.

Try to exercise again in 2–3 days.

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Produced by Help the Aged in collaboration with Wandsworth Primary Care Trust and Camden Active Health Team, London Borough of Camden

Illustrations by Marion Lefebvre

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For information on falls and injury prevention exercise classes and older people's exercise classes near you, consider contacting the leisure centre, library or health centre.

Please use this space for information about local classes