

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.

The exercise instructions and advice presented in this exercise booklet are for general information purposes only, and is in no way intended as a substitute for professional medical advice specific to any individual case.

Exercise is not without its risks. In undertaking any activity based on the instructions or advice in this exercise booklet, you assume the risk of injury resulting from performing the movements or utilizing any suggested equipment. To reduce the risk of any injury and/or illness, before beginning this or any exercise program, please seek medical advice for guidance regarding appropriate exercise levels and precautions. It is particularly important to seek such advice if you suffer from an ongoing medical condition which may be affected by exercise. Always start any exercise program slowly, never force or strain. If you feel any soreness, strain, discomfort, distress or other symptoms, stop the exercise and seek medical advice immediately.

Age UK does not guarantee that all the information contained in this exercise booklet is completely accurate, and will not be responsible for any errors or omissions. We advise that users check any information they want to rely on with professional sources.

We disclaim any liability in connection with any instructions and advice contained in this exercise booklet and any liability for products and services recommended within it. This does not include or limit in any way our liability for death or personal injury caused by our negligence; or for any matter for which it would be illegal for us to exclude, or attempt to exclude, our liability.

This exercise booklet is not intended for anyone under 18 years of age, pregnant or breast feeding women.

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.

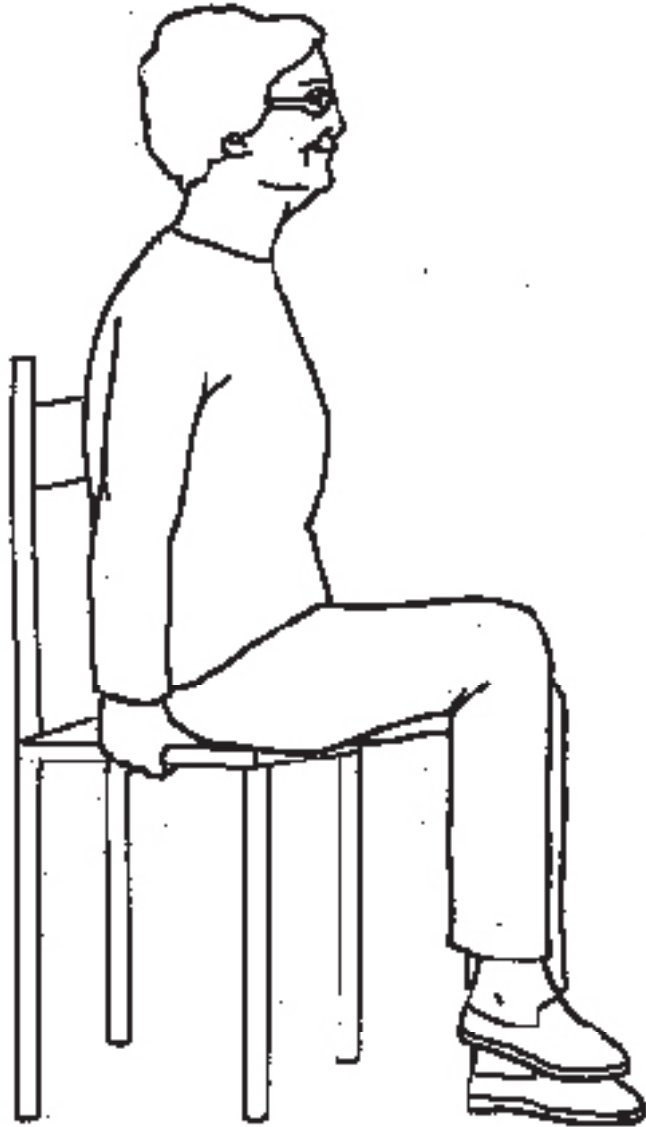
Warm-up exercises

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

There are eight warm-up exercises in this section.

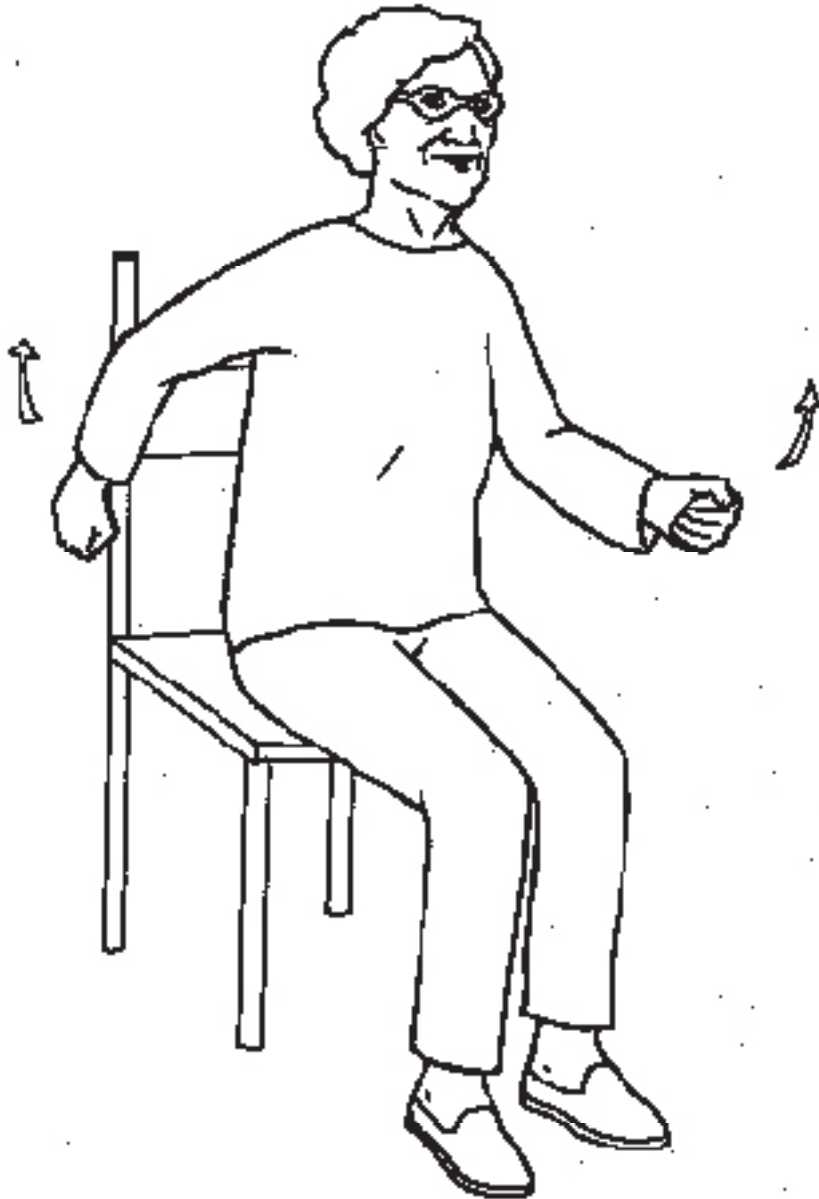
Complete *all* of the following:

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

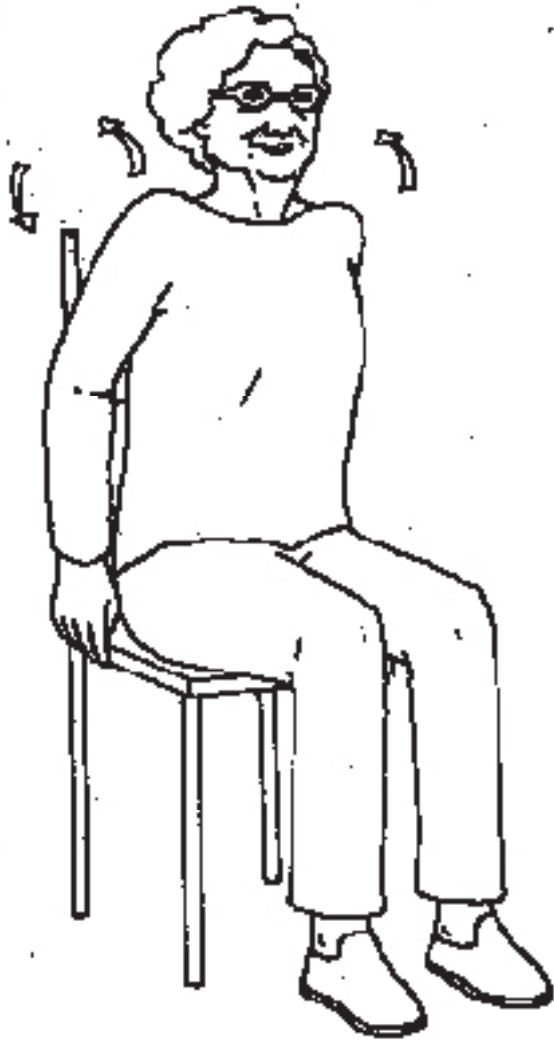
2 Arm swings



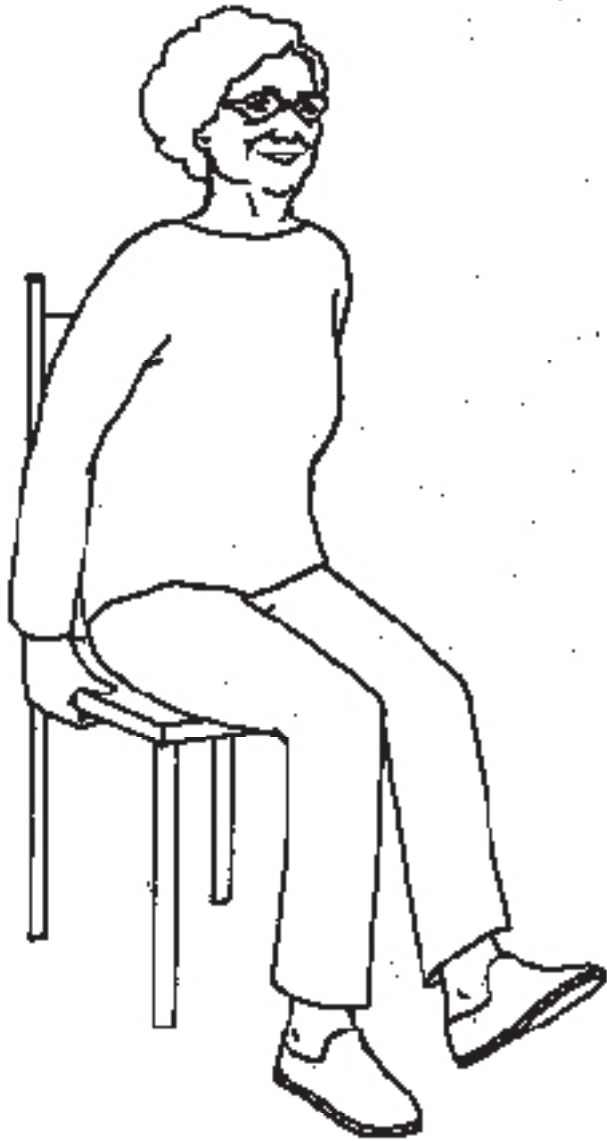
- Sit tall away from the chair back
- Place your feet flat on the floor below your knees
- Bend your elbows and swing your arms from the shoulder
- Build to a rhythm that is comfortable for you
- Continue for 30 seconds

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

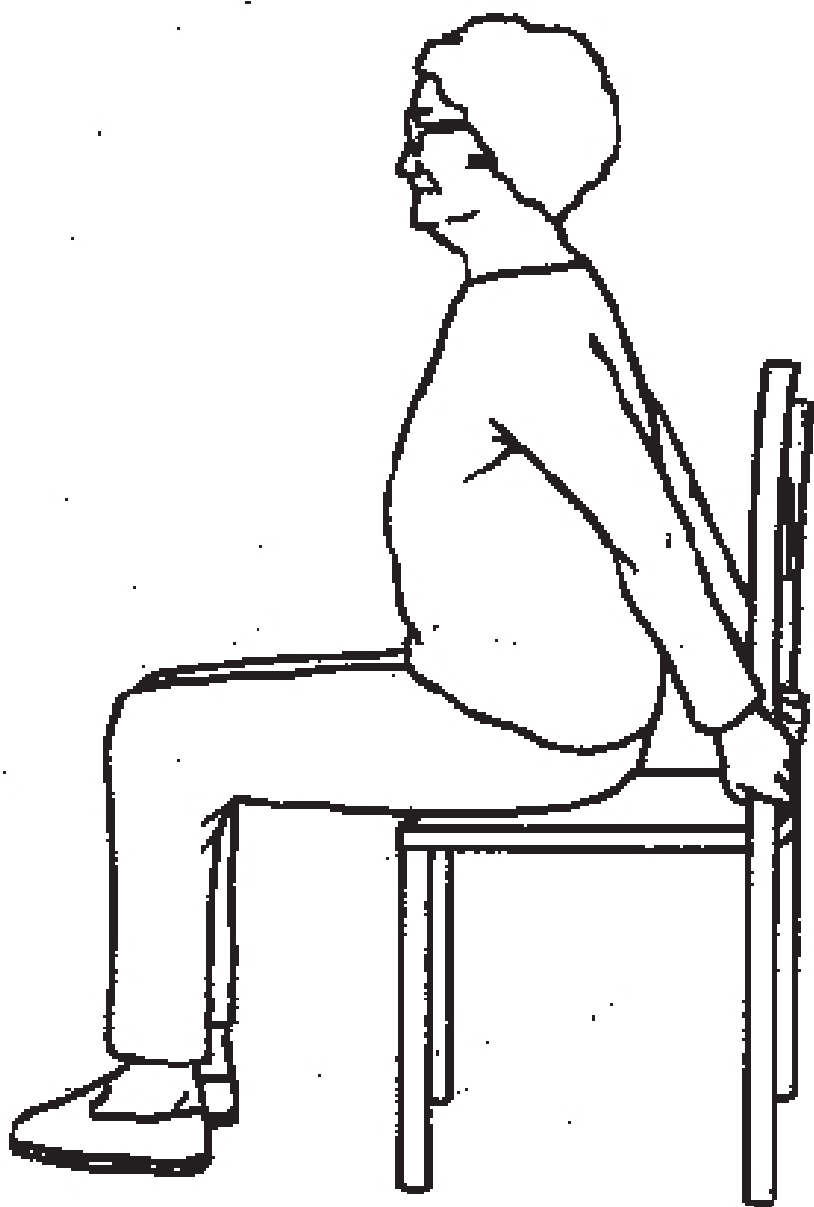


- Sit tall away from the chair back
- Hold the sides of the chair
- Place the heel of one foot on the floor, then lift it and put the toes down on the same spot
- Repeat 5 times on each leg

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

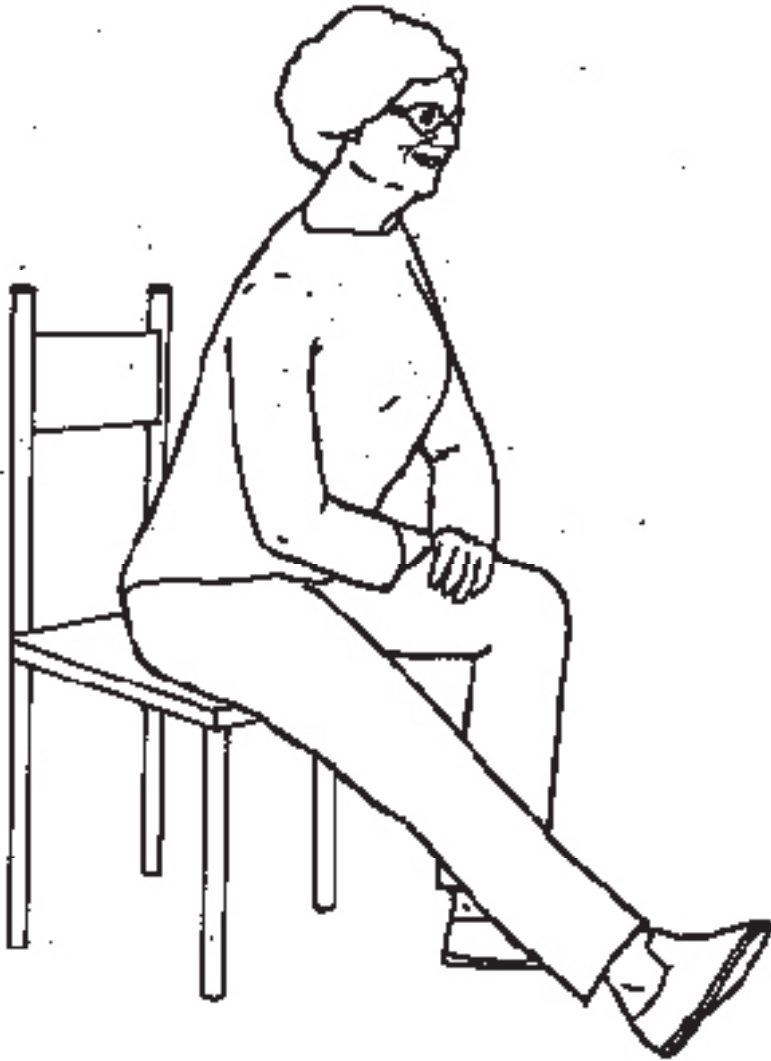




6 Chest stretch

- 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

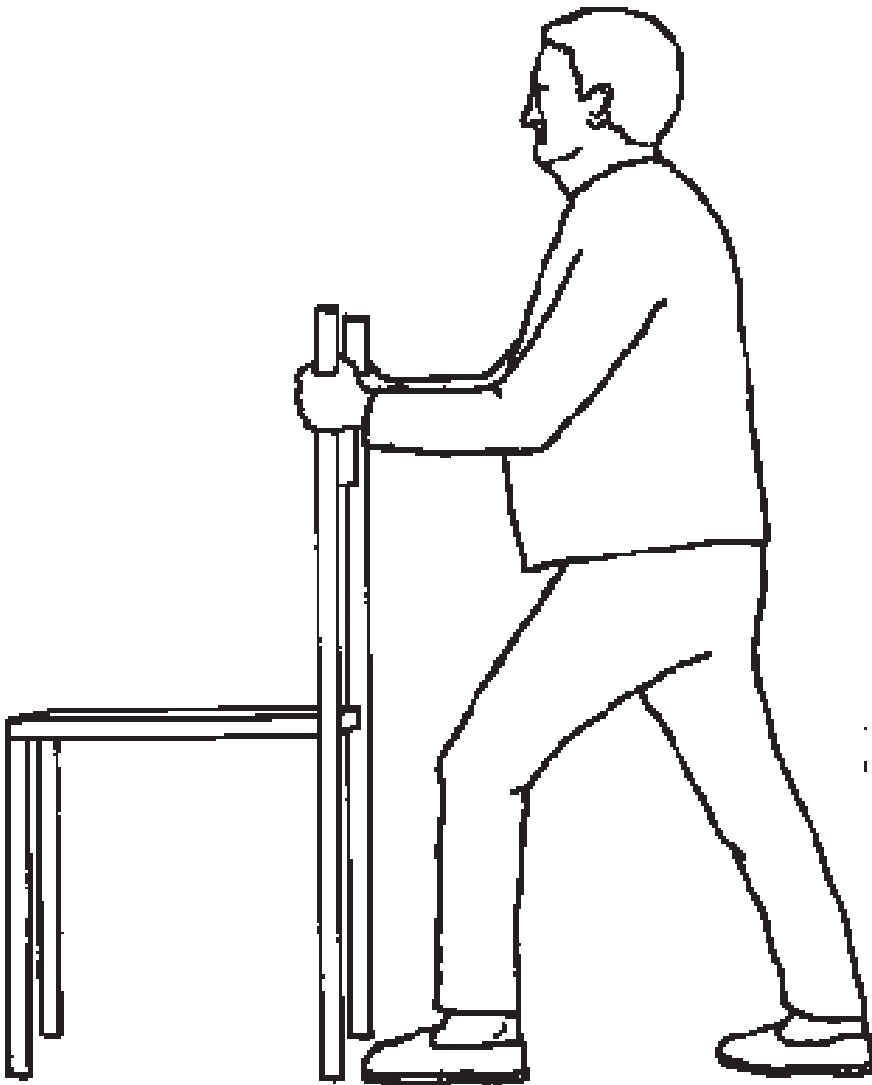
7 Back of thigh stretch



- 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



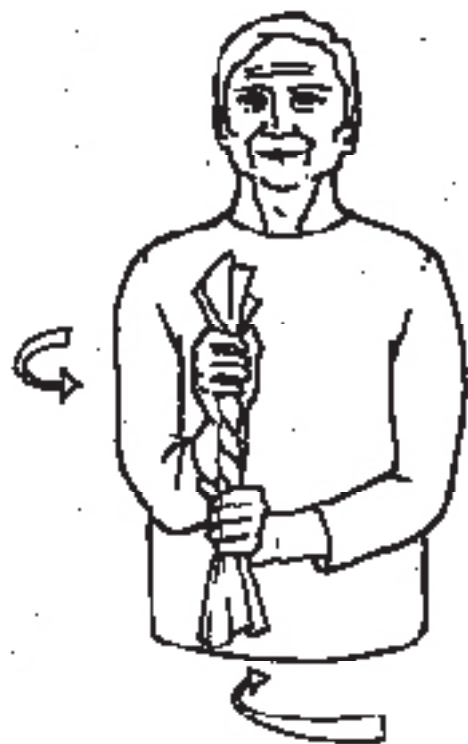
Main exercises

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.

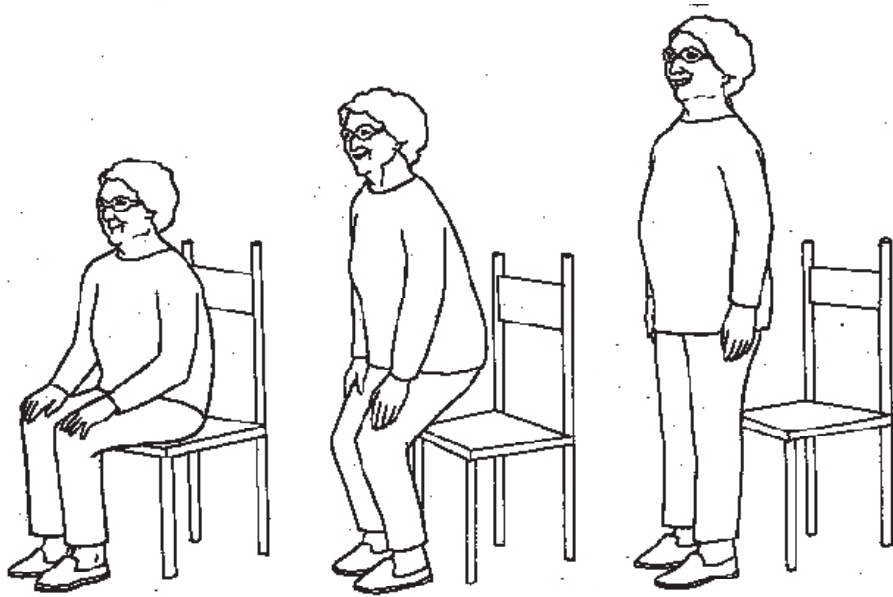
The first five exercises are to help improve bone and muscle strength



1 Wrist strengthener

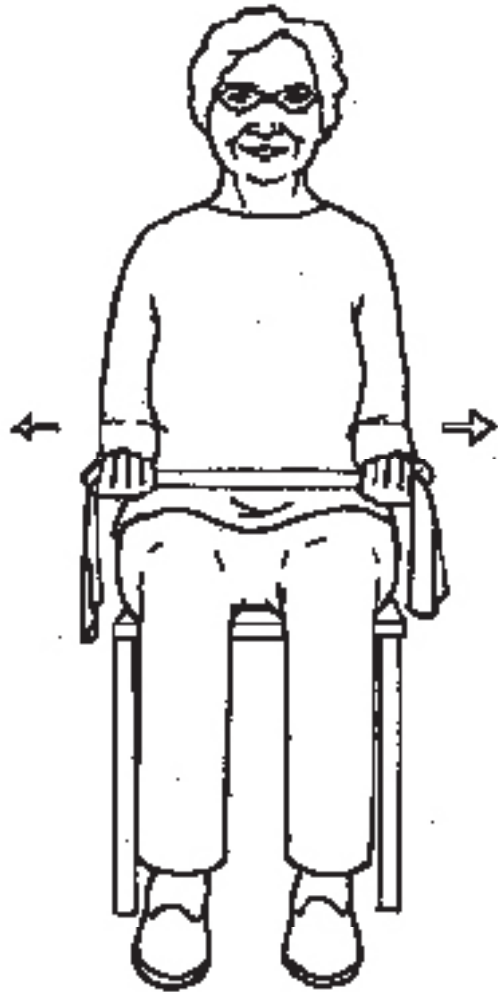
- Fold or roll the band (or towel/tights)
- Holding it with both hands, squeeze hard, then twist by bringing your elbows close to your body
- Hold for a slow count of 5 (and count out loud to ensure you don't hold your breath)
- Repeat 8 times

2 Sit to stand

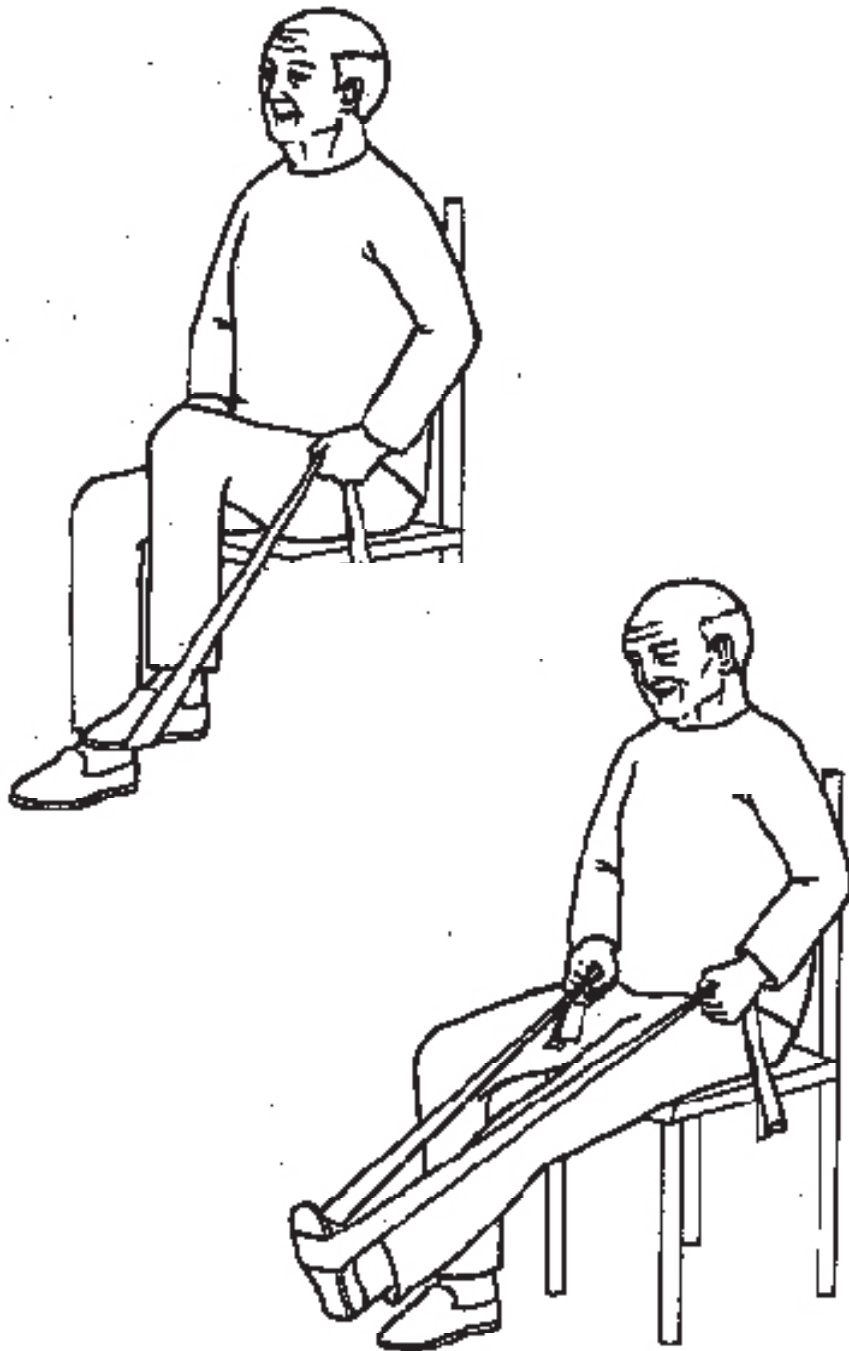


- Sit tall near the front of the chair
- Place your feet slightly behind your knees
- Lean slightly forwards
- Stand up (using your hands on the chair for support if needed. Progress to no hands over time)
- Step back until your legs touch the chair, then stand tall, bend your knees and *slowly* lower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

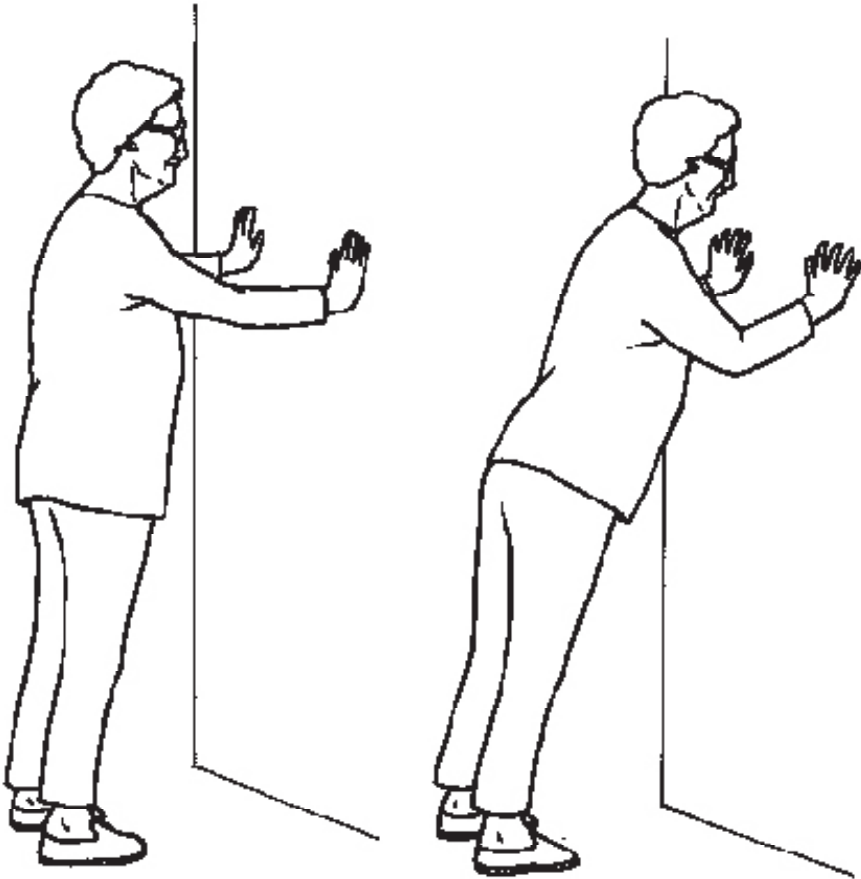


4 Thigh strengthener

- 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 arm
- Repeat 6 times then change legs!

5 Wall press-up

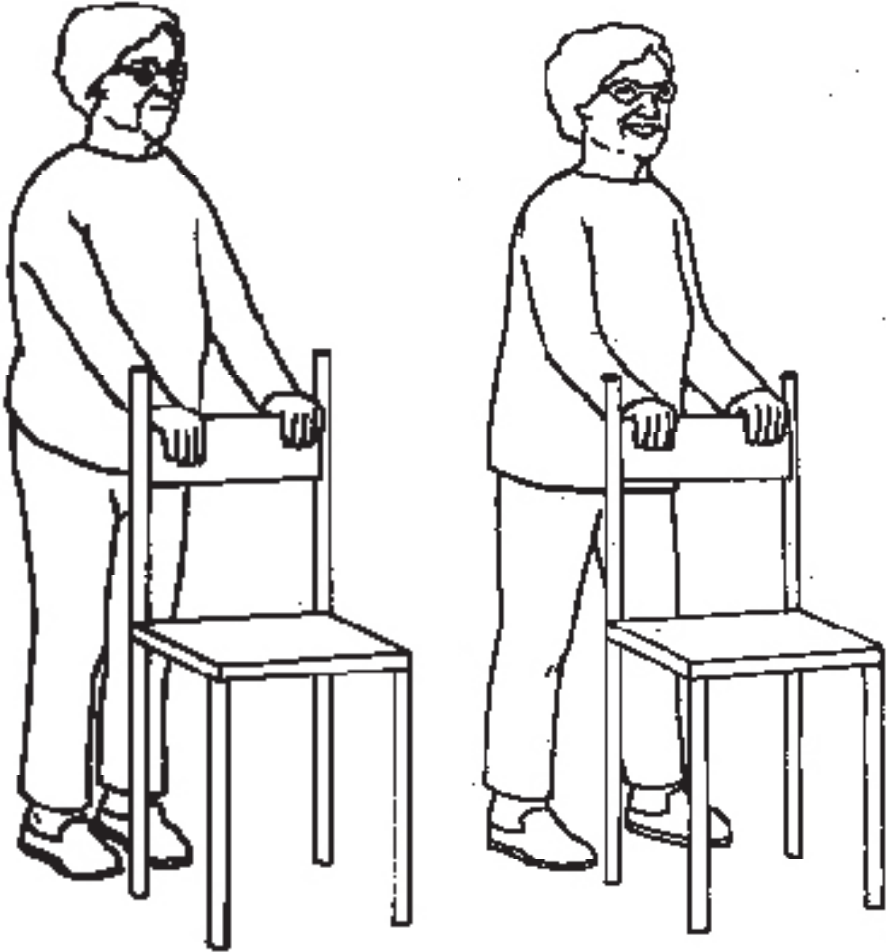
- Stand at arms length from wall
- Place your hands on the wall at chest height, fingers upwards
- Keeping your back straight and tummy tight, bend your elbows lowering your body *with control* towards the wall
- Press back to the start position
- Repeat 8 times



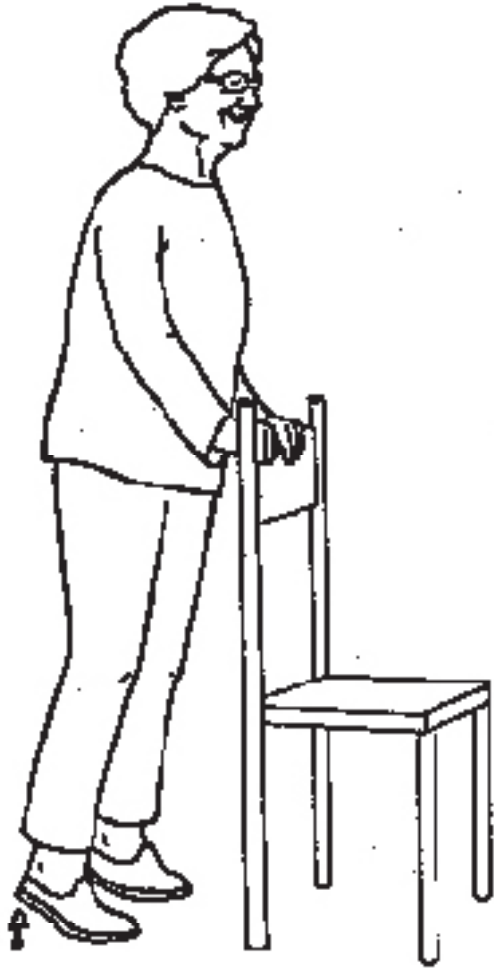
The following five exercises are to help improve your balance

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

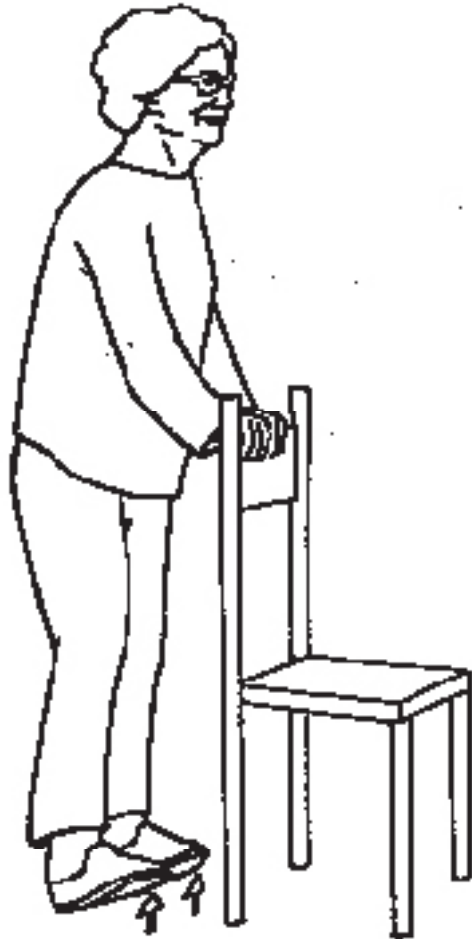


7 Heel raises



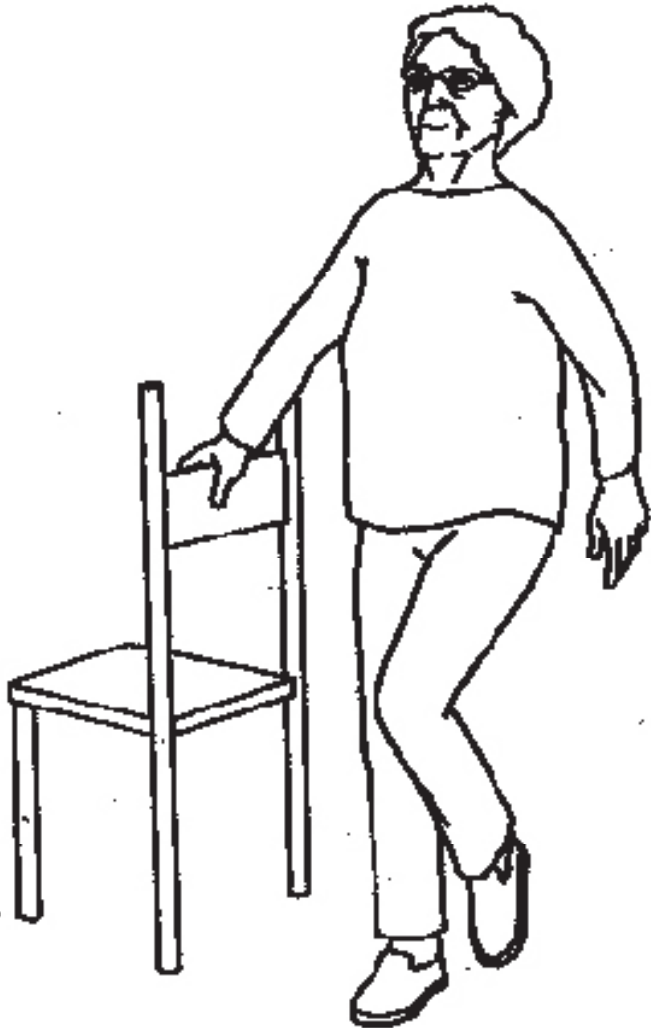
- Stand tall holding a sturdy table, chair or even the sink!
- Raise your heels taking your weight over the big toe and second toe
- Hold for a second
- Lower your heels to the floor *with control*
- Repeat 10 times

8 Toe raises

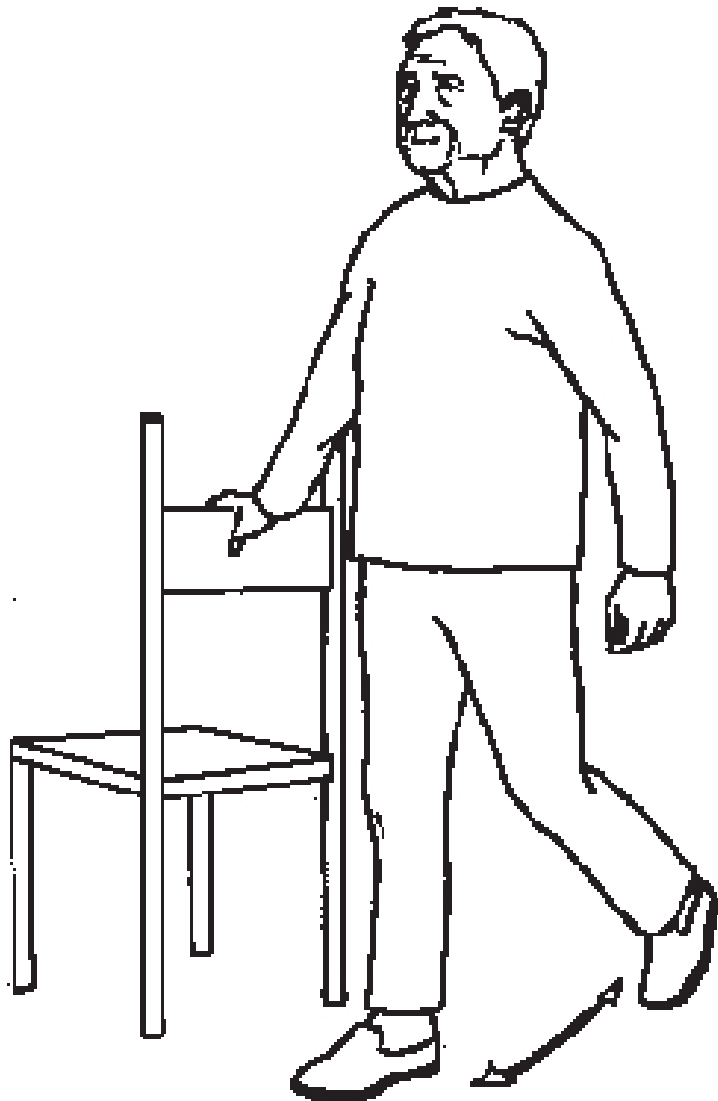


- Stand tall holding a sturdy table, chair or even the sink!
- Raise your toes taking your weight back onto your heels and without sticking your bottom out
- Hold for a second
- Lower your toes to the floor *with control*
- Repeat 10 times

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 from 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.

Written by Sheena Land, Lecturer and Trainer in exercise for older people (formerly Wandsworth Primary Care Trust) and Susie Dinan, Department of Primary Care and Population Sciences, Royal Free and University College Medical School, London

Produced by Age UK in collaboration with Wandsworth Primary Care Trust and Camden Active Health Team, London Borough of Camden

Illustrations by Marion Lefebvre

With thanks to: Samantha Hedges and Samantha Anderson, Camden Active Health Team; Piers Simey, Wandsworth Primary Care Trust; Dr Dawn Skelton, School of Nursing, University of Manchester; and exercise participants



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