

Chapter 5: Everyday Exercises for Core Strength and Flexibility

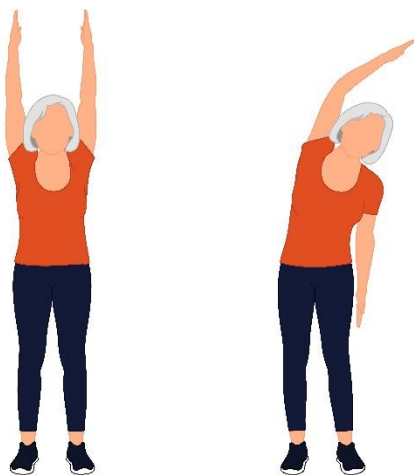
Stretching always helps me start my day in a good way. –Nyah Huston

In this chapter, you'll learn standing exercises for Flexibility as well as seated. Choose those that you feel most comfortable with. Advance from seated to standing if and when you feel strong enough.

Tips for all standing flexibility exercises:

1. While standing, take time to sense the sensation of balance points in your feet – across the ball of the foot and the heel. Feet anchor us to the ground and inform our brains that we are or are not in balance. Keep your weight equally distributed in the balls and heels of your feet as much as possible.
2. Be aware of your abdominal (stomach) muscles throughout all exercises and keep them slightly tight/engaged from the pubic bone up to your sternum. Get to know the sensation of engaging stomach muscles. You can cough and notice deeper stomach muscles tighten. Use those same muscles. This will protect your lower back.
3. Keep your breathing slow and even. If you can, inhale through the nose, out through the mouth.

Side Stretch



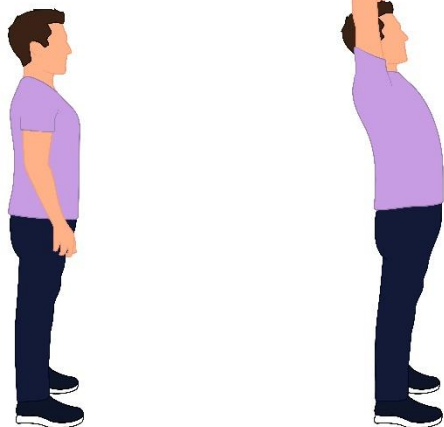
1. Stand with feet under your hips or a foot apart so you feel stable, your weight equally in the front and back of your feet. Let your arms hang at your sides. Take a deep breath and raise both arms to the side and up over your head, or as far up as your shoulders allow, hands apart.

2. Lean your head gently to the right and slowly lower your right arm down to your side. Your elbow can be bent as much as needed for comfort. Slightly tighten your abdominal muscles to keep your hips under your ribs rather than having a sway back. Stay to the side and exhale out of your mouth. Take three deep inhales and exhales, relaxing the left side of your neck, the left side

of your body, and your right shoulder with each exhale.

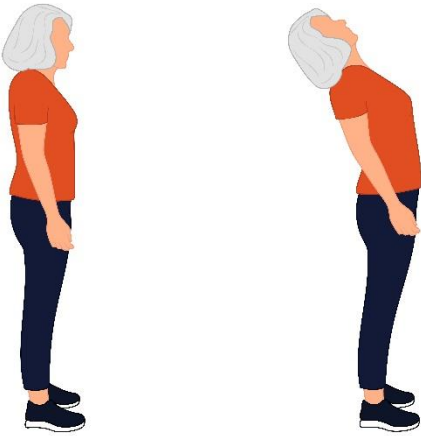
3. To come up, inhale and raise your right arm and right side to stand with both arms overhead again. It is important to keep your abdominal muscles engaged throughout. This supports your spine and protects against strain.
4. Repeat on the left side.

Overhead Stretch



1. Stand with feet under your hips or a foot apart so you feel stable. Let your arms hang at your sides. Take a deep breath and raise both arms out to the side and up over your head, or as far up as your shoulders allow, hands apart.
2. Interlace your fingers or keep them apart. Inhale and stretch straight up, allowing your shoulders, whole back, and stomach to stretch upwards. Keep your hands up and exhale, letting all the body relax. Repeat with three to five inhale stretches up and exhale to relax the shoulders, back, and stomach.
3. Additional Action: While both hands are overhead, Inhale and stretch the right arm, shoulder, and right side of your body upward. Exhale and let the right shoulder relax back down. Keeping the arms overhead, inhale and stretch the left arm, shoulder, and left side upwards. Exhale and let the left shoulder relax back down. Repeat each side five times.

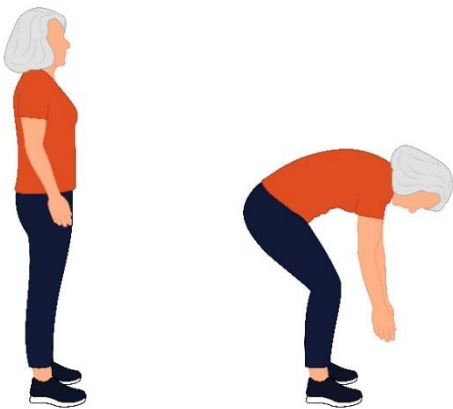
Arch Back



1. Stand with your feet under your hips. Keep your weight in both the balls and heels of your feet equally with your arms hanging at your sides.
2. Take a deep breath, hold your breath as you lift your chin and nose to the ceiling, and gently arch the upper back backward. You can hold onto a chair or counter if you fear falling. Tighten your glutes (buttocks) and thighs to hold you.
3. After holding your breath for three to five counts, squeeze your abdominals and glutes, exhale and rise back up to standing. Repeat two to four times.

NOTE: The Overhead Stretch is very good to do as a break from an activity where you lean forward for 15 minutes or more. It relaxes the low back muscles. It is excellent to stop while playing card games, gardening, at a computer, playing with a child, working on a car, cooking, or even standing for long periods of time which can put strain on the low back.

Forward Roll-Ups

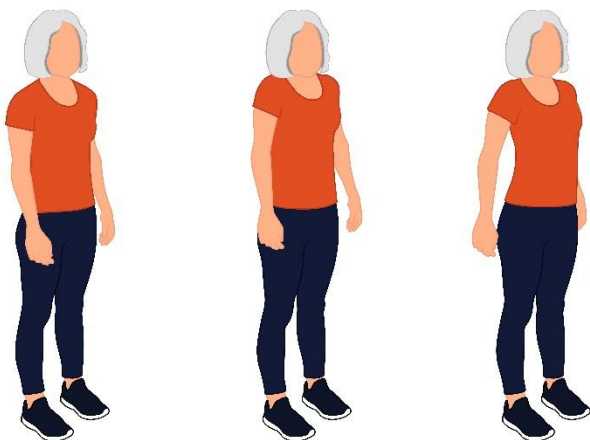


This exercise stretches and relaxes the core back muscles and opens the spaces between your vertebrae, helping to lubricate your spine and relax your back. A great stretch when standing for long periods of time or walking on hard floors like cement/concrete.

1. Stand so that your feet are parallel to one another, directly under your hips, or 6 inches apart so you feel stable. Keep your weight equally in the balls and heels of your feet. Allow your arms to hang at your sides.
2. Take a deep breath, and as you slowly exhale, drop your chin to your chest, bend your knees, and round forward. **STOP** when you feel your back is stretched comfortably.

3. Take another inhale, tighten your stomach muscles, and round back up slowly, one vertebra at a time, back to standing, exhale.
4. Repeat two to five times.

Shoulder Rolls



These improve your ability to move your shoulders and arms as well as relax your trapezius muscles and enhance your posture, which are key to balance.

1. Stand with your feet hip-distance apart. Keep your weight in both the balls and heels of your feet equally. Let your arms hang at your sides.
2. Take a deep breath and roll your shoulders up towards your ears, then backward, down, forward, and back to neutral. Roll them eight times. Keep your abdominals and glutes gently engaged throughout to protect your lower back.
3. Now reverse the shoulder roll: take a deep breath, and roll your shoulders up, forward, down, backward, up towards your ears, and back to neutral.
4. Roll them eight times.

Hip Circles



1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent. Your arms hang by your sides or can be on your hips.
2. Begin by gently rotating your hips in a circular motion, moving them forward, then to the side, to the back, and then to the other side and back to the front.
3. As you rotate your hips, imagine drawing a circle with your pelvis/hip bones.
4. Keep your upper body stable and relaxed throughout the movement.
5. Aim to make the circles as smooth and controlled as possible, focusing on the range of motion in your hips. Engage your abdominals to rotate your hips forward.
6. Repeat the circles in one direction for several repetitions, then switch and rotate in the opposite direction.
7. Perform the hip circles slowly and gradually increase the size of the circles as your muscles warm up and loosen. This is excellent to relax the lower back. Especially good after lifting something, bending forward for an extended period or just being sedentary and sitting a lot.

Rotational Stretch



1. Stand with feet outside your hips, about 2 feet apart. Keep your weight in both the balls and heels of your feet equally. Lift your arms slightly away from your body.
2. You have the option of gently bending your knees or having them straight. Either way, gently engage (tighten) your glutes, abdominals, and thighs to hold your hips in place.
3. Take a full breath. On the exhale, gently swing your arms from the shoulder, loosely wrapping them around your body to the left.
4. Inhale and unwrap from the left, swinging arms across the front and exhaling and wrap your arms around your body to the right. Inhale back center, and exhale, repeat to the left, inhale center, and then exhale back to the right. Keep it small, but just enough to rotate your torso and spine.
5. Continue for three to five wraps each way, inhaling across the front and exhaling as you wrap left or right, back and forth.

Hamstring and Calf Stretches

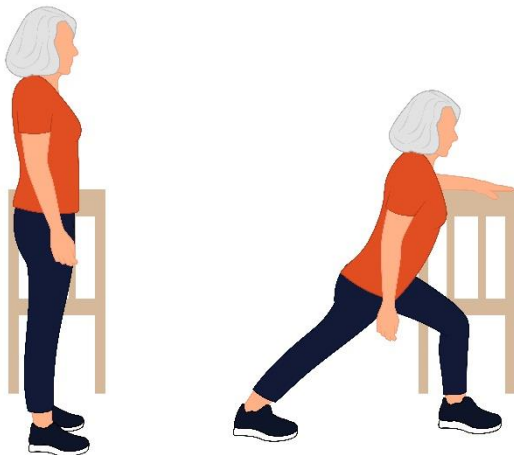
When calves are tight, they pull on the hamstrings, which then pull on the pelvic muscles, which pull on the lower back and up the back, even into the neck. This connectedness of the musculature throughout the entire body is why we isolate and stretch all these areas. If we take the time to stretch all these areas of the body, we can achieve total body relaxation, which can then reduce aches and pains, improve balance and ease of movement, and make us feel more confident, energized, and calm.

Hamstring Stretch



1. Stand facing a sturdy chair or countertop, holding onto it for support.
2. Extend one leg before you, keeping your heel on the ground and pointing your toes up.
3. Lean forward slightly from your hips and keep your back straight until you feel a gentle stretch in the back of your thigh.
4. Inhale and slowly exhale, staying for five deep inhales and exhales. If you want to encourage more hamstring stretching, do NOT bounce. Simply lean gently forward into the hamstring a little more on the exhale and hold. Do not force or go into pain, just feel good stretch.
5. Switch and do the other leg.

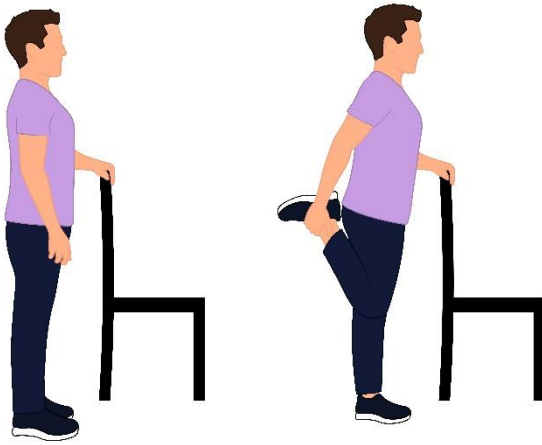
Calf Stretch



1. Stand beside the back of a chair and hold on to the top of the chair with the hand closest to it. (You may also do this exercise facing a wall and rest your hands on the wall at shoulder height for support.)
2. Step back with one foot, about 2 to 2 ½ feet behind you.
3. Lean forward, bending your front knee while keeping your back leg straight.

4. Feel the stretch in your calf muscle. Inhale and exhale slowly, maintaining a gentle stretch down the back of your leg as you press the opposite heel into the floor. Do not bounce.
5. Bring the back leg back to standing. Then repeat on the other side with the other foot.

Quad Stretch



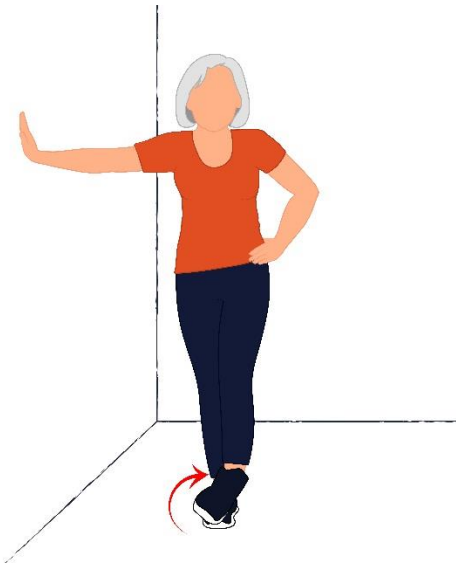
1. Stand next to a sturdy chair or wall for support.

2. Hold onto the support with one hand.

3. Bend your right knee and bring your right foot up towards your buttocks, holding it with your free hand. If it is difficult to reach your foot, wrap a tie or strap around your ankle and gently pull the heel up behind your glute using the tie. Do not create pain, just feel-good stretch.

4. Hold for 15–30 seconds, slowly inhaling and exhaling. Gently pull the foot upward on the exhale if it feels good and doesn't cause strain or pain. Otherwise, focus on the thigh, thinking it is relaxing on your exhales. Repeat on the left leg.

Standing Ankle Rolls



1. Stand upright with your feet hip-width apart, holding onto the back of a sturdy chair for support if needed. You may also do this sitting in a chair.
2. Lift one foot off the ground in front of you. Then, rotate your ankle in a circular motion, counterclockwise and then clockwise.
3. Aim to do 10–15 rotations in each direction, then switch your standing leg and do with the other ankle.

Hand Stretch Tips

It is extremely helpful to stretch your hands every day. We use them for so much in our lives and it is important to keep them flexible and able.

- Stretching your hands before, during, and after doing a lot of hand work such as keyboarding at a computer, gardening/troweling, cooking, cleaning, athletic pursuits, etc.
- All hand stretches may done sitting in a chair as well.

Hand Stretches: Palms Facing Each Other



1. Extend your arms in front of you at shoulder height, palms facing each other. Spread your fingers apart or keep them together, your choice.

- Inhale and tilt both wrists with fingers going upward; exhale and tilt both wrists with fingers going downward. Try to keep the forearm still and only move from the wrist.

- Repeat 4 to 6 times, slowly breathing and gently moving the wrists up and down—no jerky, hard or fast movements.

Hand Stretches: Palms Facing Up



1. Extend your arms in front of you at shoulder height, palms facing up.
2. INHALE and tilt both wrists, curling fingers into a ball. EXHALE and open the fingers, wiping them outward and as far down as they comfortably go. You might think of your fingers wiping the inside of a soccer ball.
3. Repeat 4 to 6 times, slowly breathing and gently moving the wrists up and down—no jerky or hard movements.

Hand Stretches: Palms Facing Down



1. Extend your arms in front of you at shoulder height, palms facing down.
2. INHALE and tilt both wrists up, extending fingers upward. EXHALE and wipe the fingers outward and as far down as they comfortably go. You might think of your fingers wiping the inside of a soccer ball.
3. Repeat 4 to 6 times, slowly breathing and gently moving the wrists up and

down—no jerky or hard movements.

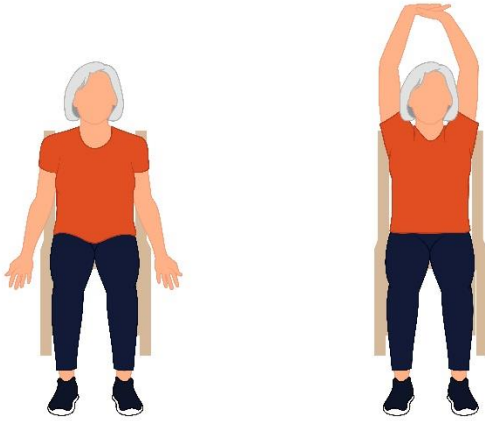
Seated Exercises for Flexibility

Flexibility Tips for Seated Exercises:

- All seated exercises can be done anywhere you are seated and multiple times a day.

- Do a few or all of them, especially after using your shoulders a lot when gardening, woodworking, or at a computer, on a long car or airplane ride, etc.

Seated Overhead Stretch



1. Sit up straight in a chair.
2. Lift both arms overhead. You can interlace your fingers, inhale, and stretch your hands towards the ceiling. If you prefer not to interlace the fingers, just stretch your hands towards the ceiling. Either way, try to stretch from the hips and waist, up the back as you inhale. On the exhale, relax your body and shoulders. Repeat five times with an inhale.
3. You can add alternately inhaling and reaching one arm at a time upwards, including stretching up from the waist if you are able. Exhaling and relaxing the arm and shoulder back down. Repeat with the other arm, inhale reaching and exhale relaxing. Alternate arms and do five sets of right arm and left arm reach.

Seated Shoulder Rolls

1. Sit upright in a chair with your feet flat on the ground and your abdominals slightly tight/engaged to keep your rib cage still.
2. Take a deep breath and roll your shoulders up towards your ears, then backward, down, forward, and back up to neutral. Roll them four to eight times. Keep your abdominals and glutes gently engaged to keep your low back from arching.
3. Now reverse the shoulder roll: take a deep inhale, roll your shoulders up towards your ears then roll your shoulders forward, down, backward, up towards your ears, and back to neutral. Roll them four to eight times.

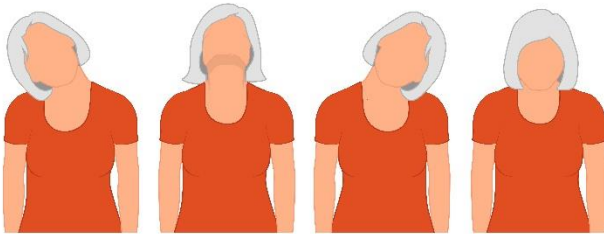


Seated Forward Roll-Up



1. Sit in a chair with your legs extended, heels on the floor, and feet flexed with toes upwards. Extend your arms in front of you.
2. Slowly curl your chin to your chest and gently round the upper back, only as far as is comfortable. Then, inhale as you roll back up to the seated position, one vertebra at a time.
3. Repeat three to five times slowly.

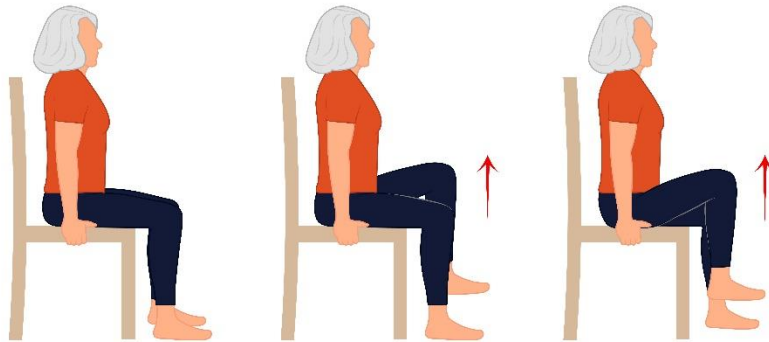
Neck Circles



1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the ground and your back straight.
2. Place your hands on your thighs, ensuring you relax your shoulders.
3. Gently lower your chin as if to touch your chest until you feel a stretch in the back of your neck.
4. Slowly rotate your head to the right, bringing your right ear towards your right shoulder.
5. Continue the circular motion, gently rolling your head back. Don't let the head go all the way back; lift the head across the back instead.
6. Complete the circle by bringing your left ear towards your left shoulder.
7. Perform five to ten circles in one direction, then reverse the direction for another five to ten circles.

Hip Marching (aka Seated Leg Lifts)

Seated hip marching helps seniors maintain lower body strength. It also improves walking endurance and enhances the ability to pick up objects from lower surfaces. Other benefits of this exercise include the following:



- Strengthens the muscles that help lift your leg over obstacles.

- Boosts walking

stamina by strengthening the quadriceps (thighs).

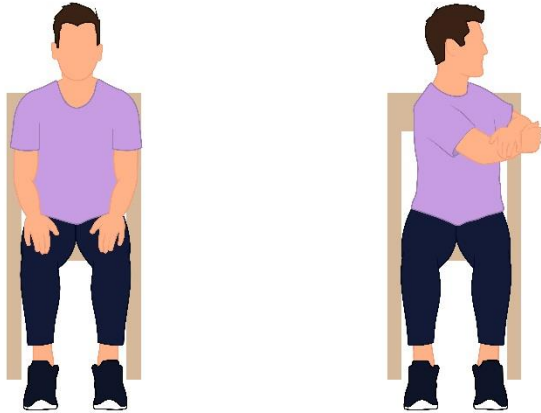
- Improves balance for navigating spaces at home, including up and down stairs, or outdoors.

Do This Exercise:

1. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles as you inhale and lift the right knee as far up as you can, keeping the abdominal muscles engaged throughout the whole exercise.
3. Lower your leg back down as you exhale.
4. Alternately lifting your knees on your inhale and lowering your leg on your exhale, for a total of 10 lifts per leg.

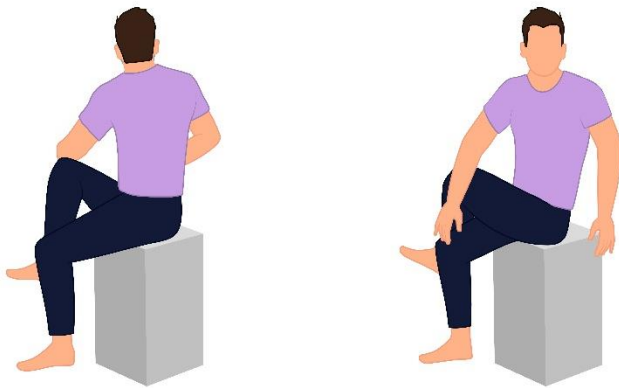
Remember to maintain regular breathing throughout the exercise. To prevent fatigue and soreness, avoid performing more than 20 hip marches in a row. If you feel the hip flexor start to feel tired or painful, stop. For an added challenge, you can place your hands on your thighs and resist the upward movement of your knees by pushing downward with your hands.

Seated Rotational Stretch



1. Sit up straight in a chair.
2. Lift your arms up and grab each opposite forearm, or place one hand on each shoulder (Butterfly pose).
3. Inhale deeply, then exhale as you slowly rotate the upper body to your left side while keeping the hips still and in place. Do not rotate to the point of discomfort.
4. Inhale arms and body straight ahead again, then exhale to the other side. Repeat five times back and forth to each side.

Advanced Seated Rotational Stretch



1. Sit up straight in a chair.
2. Cross your left leg over your right thigh (or cross your left ankle across your right ankle). Inhale and place your left hand across to your right thigh. On your exhale, rotate your body to the right. Inhale and exhale, returning to straight front.
3. Inhale and place your right hand across the top of your left thigh. On your exhale, rotate your body to the left. Inhale and exhale, returning to straight front. Repeat 2 to 3 times
4. Other side: Uncross the left leg, then cross the right leg over the left (or cross your right ankle over your left ankle). Inhale and place your right hand across to your left thigh. On your exhale, rotate your body to the left. Inhale and exhale, returning to straight front.

5. Inhale and place your left hand across the top of your right thigh. On your exhale, rotate your body to the right. Inhale and exhale, returning to straight front. Repeat 2 to 3 times.

Ankle Rolls



1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the ground.
2. Lift both feet off the ground and extend them slightly in front of you. Engage your abdominals to keep your low back against the back of the chair.
3. Make circles with your ankles outwards about 8 times.
4. Now go in the other direction, inwards about 8 times.

Low Back Stretch on Floor



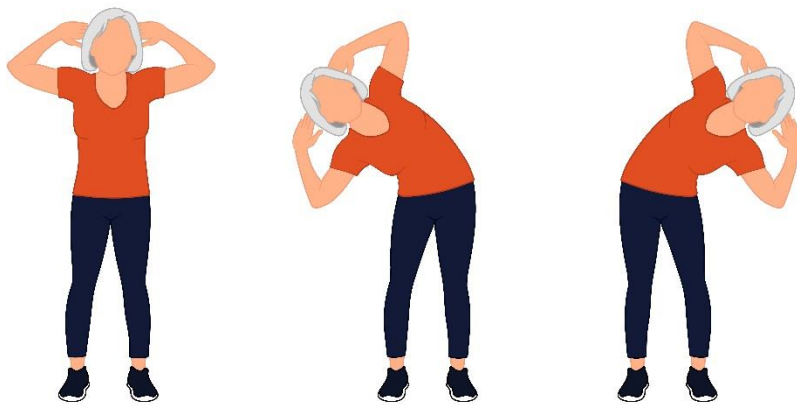
1. Lie on your back on the floor, bend both knees so feet are flat and in front of your hips.
2. Engage your abdominals, pressing your belly button into the floor.
3. Inhale. On the exhale, slowly lean both knees to the left. Take 2 deep inhales and exhales.
3. On the next inhale, pull both knees up and then exhale them to the right, continuing to keep your abdominals engaged. Take 2 deep inhales and exhales.
4. Inhale the knees back up. Repeat to each side 3 to 5 times.

Exercises for Core Strengthening

Daily core exercises are essential for seniors like us to maintain strength, stability, and mobility as we age. Regular workouts can improve posture and organ function, reduce the risk of falls, and ease back pain. Strengthening core muscles also supports your spine, enhances balance, and boosts functional independence. Making it a habit to include core exercises in your daily routine has great potential to improve ongoing physical well-being.

Remember to perform each movement slowly, engage core muscles, and maintain steady breathing. If discomfort arises, stop immediately. Consistent daily practice can significantly enhance core strength, stability, and balance over time.

Side Bend



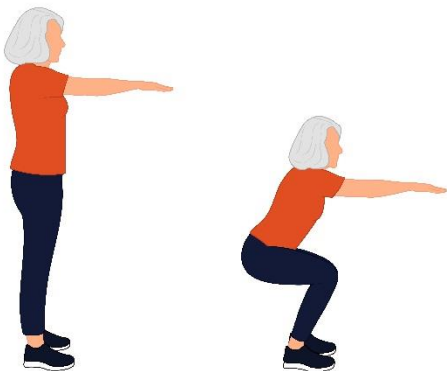
1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your arms relaxed at your sides.
2. Lift your arms towards your head, bend both elbows, and touch the sides of your head with the fingers of each hand.
3. Inhale, and as you exhale, lean your upper body to the right, keeping your gaze forward.
4. Hold the stretch for three breaths in and out, feeling the stretch along the left side of your torso and tightening your abdominal muscles as you exhale.
5. Inhale and use your left side muscles and abdominals to raise your body back to the standing position you started in.
6. Repeat to on the other side: inhale and exhale, lean upper body to the left, gaze stays forward. Inhale and use your right side muscles and abdominals to raise your body back to the standing position you started in.
7. Perform 5–10 repetitions on each side.

Side Reaches



1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and keep your arms relaxed at your sides.
2. Engage your abdominal and side (core) muscles. Put the right hand on your right hip for support. Inhale and raise your left arm out to the side, up and over head. As you exhale, lean body and arm from the waist to the right.
3. Hold the stretch for 3 to 5 inhales and exhales, feeling the stretch along the left side of your torso. Keep the abdominals engaged.
4. Arc the left arm out to the side and down as you lift your body back to the standing position you started in, using your side and abdominal muscles to lift your body back up.
5. Repeat for the other side: Engage your abdominal and side (core) muscles. Put the left hand on your left hip for support. Inhale and raise your right arm out to the side, up and over head. As you exhale, lean your body and arm from the waist to the left.
6. Arc the right arm out to the side and down as you lift your body back to the standing position you started in, using your side and abdominal muscles to lift your body back up.
7. Perform five-to-ten repetitions, alternating from side to side.

Squat



1. Stand up tall with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Toes can be facing forward or slightly outward.
3. Hold onto a chair with both hands or keep your arms straight out from your shoulders in front for balance.
4. Inhale and engage abdominal muscles (core), exhale and hinge (bend) at the hips, and sit back as you would if you were to sit on a chair.

5. Keep your head and eyes forward, your chest upright, and your heels firmly planted. Slowly inhale and exhale.
6. You may deepen the sit or not, by pushing your hips back to lower into a squat as if you're about to sit in a chair.
7. Inhale and rise. Repeat 3 to 10 times, increasing as you get stronger.



Lunge

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and keep your hands on your hips. You may also hold the back of a chair in front of you.
2. Take a step forward with your right foot, lowering your body into a lunge position. As needed, you can support yourself with your hands on the back of the chair.
3. Inhale, then exhale, and bend your right knee to about 90 degrees, keeping your left leg straight behind you and your weight in the front right thigh.
4. Keep your torso upright and your core engaged as you lower your body, continuing to inhale and exhale for three breaths in and out.
5. Push through your right heel to step the right leg back and return to the starting position.
6. Repeat on the other side, stepping forward with your left foot.
7. Perform five to ten lunges on each leg.

Modified Plank in a Chair



1. Stand facing a sturdy chair, ensuring it won't slide.
2. Put your forearms on the seat of the chair, keeping them shoulder-width apart.
3. Step your feet back until your body forms a straight line from your head to your heels.
4. Engage your abdominal, glute, and thigh muscles and hold this position for 15-30 seconds.

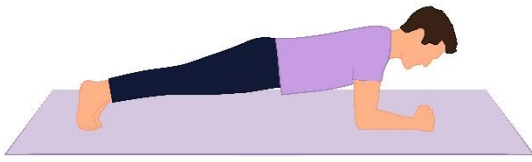
5. Keep your back straight by keeping the abdominals, glutes, and thighs tight. Avoid letting your hips sink or your back arch.
6. Focus on breathing steadily throughout the exercise. After several breaths, walk your feet in and back under you, then tighten your abdominals, inhale, and rise back to standing.
7. Gradually increase the duration of the hold as you become stronger.
8. Aim for three to five repetitions, with a rest in between each set.

Plank Walkout - Advanced Exercise



1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your arms at your sides.
2. Bend forward at the hips and place your hands on the ground in front of you, keeping your legs straight if you can; otherwise, bend the knees.
3. Walk your hands forward and drop your hips towards the ground until your body is in a flat plank position, with your hands directly under your shoulders and your body in a straight line from head to heels. Tighten your stomach muscles, back muscles, thighs, and glutes. This exercise uses the entire core as well as the shoulder muscles.
4. Hold the plank position for a few seconds, breathing slowly in and out as you continue to engage your core muscles.
5. Walk your hands back towards your feet, bending your knees as needed. Drop your chin to your chest, inhale and rise up, one vertebra at a time, returning to the standing position
6. Perform five to ten repetitions of the plank walkout.

Forearm Plank on the Floor—Medium-Level Exercise



1. Begin by lying face down on the floor with your elbows bent and forearms flat on the ground.
2. Tuck your toes and engage all your core muscles: abdominals, back, thigh, and glute muscles and lift your body off the ground, forming a straight line from your head to your heels. You will also use arm muscles: biceps, triceps, and deltoids.
3. Hold this position, breathing evenly in and out, for as long as you can, aiming for 15-30 seconds. Repeat twice.

Single Leg Lift on Hands and Knees



1. Begin on your hands and knees in a tabletop position, with your wrists aligned under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
2. Extend your left leg back behind you, parallel to the ground.
3. To stabilize your body, engage the core muscles: abdominals and left glute. Do not arch your back by keeping the abdominals engaged and hips lifted.
4. Hold the pose for a few breaths, then inhale and pull your left knee back to the ground. Repeat 4 to 8 times.
5. Repeat on the opposite side, extending your right leg back to start, all core muscles engaged throughout. Do 4 to 8 repetitions of left elbow towards right knee.

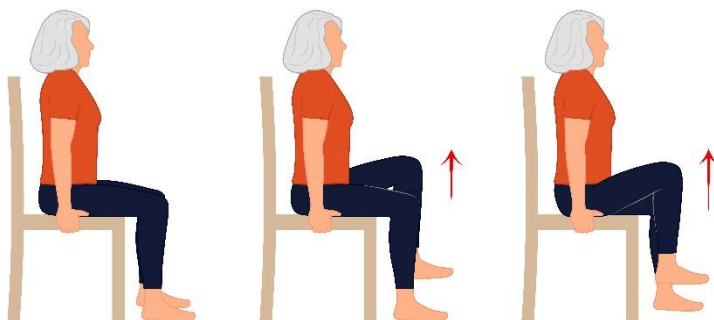
Seated Side Bends



1. Sit up tall in a chair with your feet flat on the ground.
2. Interlock your fingers, place the palms of your hands behind your head, and point your elbows out to the sides.
3. Inhale and, on the exhale, slowly lean to the right side, bringing your elbow towards your right hip.
4. Inhale and return to the position you started in and repeat, exhaling to the left side, left elbow towards your left hip.

5. Aim for 10-12 repetitions on each side.

Seated Leg Lifts

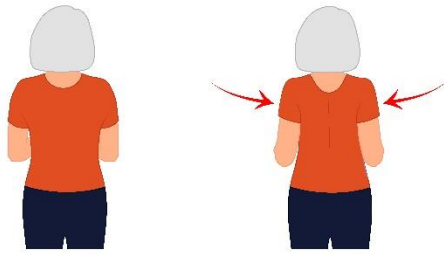


1. Sit on the edge of a sturdy chair with your back straight and feet flat on the ground.
2. Hold onto the sides of the chair for support
3. Tighten your abdominals, straighten your right leg, and lift your right leg straight out in front

of you, ensuring it is high enough to be parallel to the ground. Flex your right foot and tighten your right thigh.

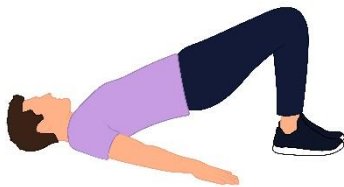
4. Hold that position for a few seconds while keeping your abdominals tight, then lower it back down.
5. Repeat with the left leg.
6. Aim for 10-12 repetitions on each leg.

Shoulder Squeeze



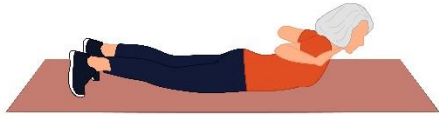
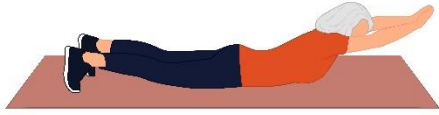
1. Begin by sitting or standing tall with your shoulders relaxed and your spine straight.
2. Inhale deeply, gently tighten your abdominals, and squeeze your shoulder blades together in your upper back together.
3. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds, focusing on the sensation in your upper back then relax your shoulders as you exhale. Repeat the shoulder squeeze for 5 repetitions.
4. Throughout the exercise, maintain good posture, keeping your chest open, your abdominals tight, and your shoulders/trapezius muscles relaxed, down, and away from your ears.
5. If you experience any discomfort or strain, reduce the intensity of the squeeze.

Glute Bridges on Floor



1. Lie on your back, bending your knees and keeping your feet flat on the floor, in line with your hips. Feel the bottom of your feet firmly pressed against the floor—the ball and heel of the foot equally.
2. Inhale and engage your abdominals, back, glutes, and thighs (core). Then, lift your hips towards the ceiling, squeezing your glutes at the top.
3. Hold that position, breathing evenly in and out, for a few seconds, then exhale and lower your hips back down, one vertebra at a time if possible.
4. Aim for 10-12 repetitions.

Superman Pose on the Floor



1. Lie on your stomach on the floor, keeping your face down. Extend your arms overhead and parallel to the floor, keeping your legs straight.
2. Take a deep inhale and lift your arms, chest, and legs off the ground simultaneously, keeping your gaze down to avoid straining your neck. Reach as far forward with your arms as you can and as far backward with your legs and feet as you can, giving your vertebrae and back muscles a great stretch.
3. Hold this position, exhaling and inhaling, for a few seconds, then exhale and lower arms and legs back down.
4. Aim for 10-12 repetitions.

Exercises for Balance and Alignment Awareness

Ensuring your balance and alignment is crucial as a senior. These exercises enhance stability and coordination, reduce the risk of falls, and promote proper posture. By integrating daily routines that focus on balance and alignment, you can strengthen muscles supporting your spine and joints, preventing injuries. Moreover, incorporating exercises and yoga poses designed to improve balance and alignment enhances mobility and supports overall well-being.

Walking Heel-to-Toe



The brain senses balance first in the feet. How we walk is key to the brain sensing and keeping us in balance.

1. Maintain a steady heel-to-toe gait. As you step forward, strike the floor with your heel first, then roll through your heel to your toe, and push out of the step with your toe.
2. Try not to strike the floor with your toes first or take steps with feet flat.
3. Consciously use Heel-To-Toe walking as much as possible whenever you are walking. This is a good habit to use all the time.

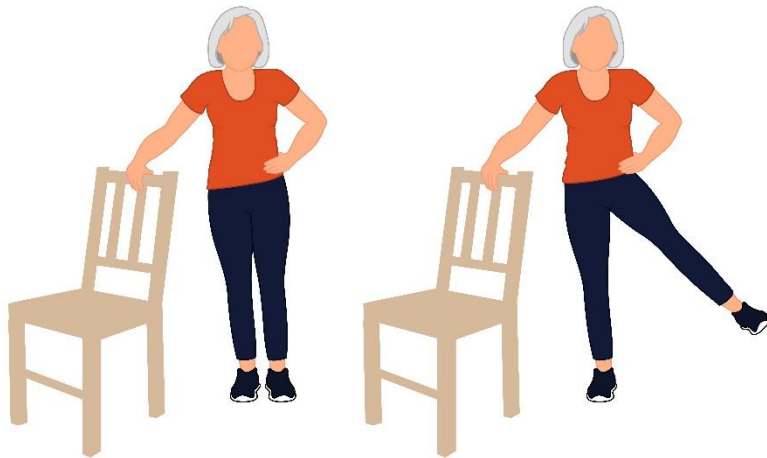
Back Leg Raises



1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding onto it for support.
2. Shift your weight onto one leg and lift the other leg straight behind you, keeping it in line with your body.
3. Inhale and exhale evenly as you hold for a moment, then lower your leg back down slow and with control.

4. Perform 10-15 repetitions on each leg, aiming for 2-3 sets.

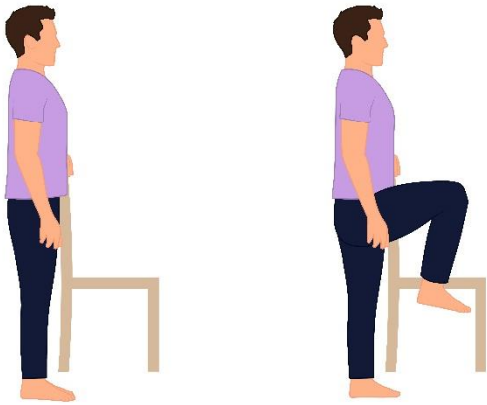
Single Leg Raise to Side with Support (e.g., Chair, Kitchen Counter)



1. Stand next to a chair or kitchen counter, holding onto it lightly for support.
2. Shift your weight onto one leg and lift the other sideways, keeping it straight.
3. Inhale and exhale evenly as you hold for a moment at the top, then lower your leg back down with control.

4. Perform 10-15 repetitions on each leg, aiming for two to three sets.

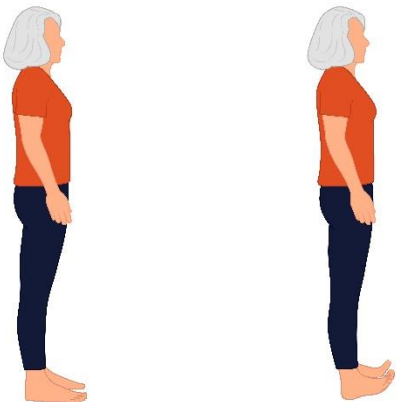
Marching in Place



1. Stand next to a chair or counter, which will provide you with support if you feel like you're about to fall.
2. Stand like you normally would, with your feet slightly apart and your arms hanging at your side. Have your weight in the balls and heels of your feet equally.
3. March in place. Inhale as you lift a knee high toward the ceiling and elbows to 50 degrees. Exhale the knee down, then repeat with the other leg.

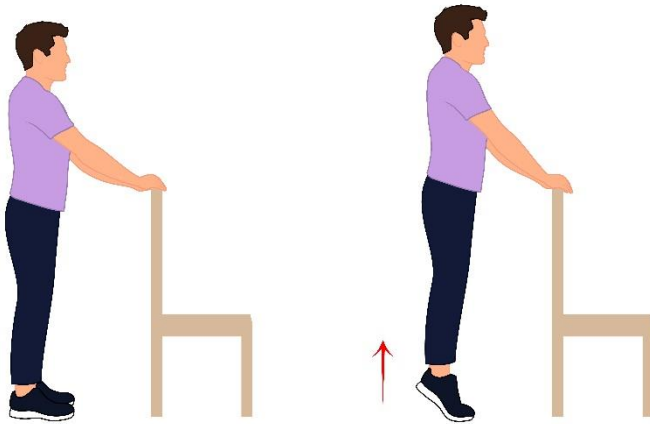
4. March 20 both legs 20 times.

Toe Lifts



1. Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding onto a chair or wall for support if needed.
2. Lift your toes (and the balls of your feet if you can) so your weight shifts back into your heels. Do your best not to bend forward or let your hips move or go backward. Let it all happen in your feet, Achilles, and calves. This is a good stretch for them. Flexible feet allow us to use our whole foot and the brain sense balance.
3. Lower your toes (and balls of the feet) slowly and with control, your weight shifting into the whole foot.
4. Perform 10-15 repetitions, aiming for two to three sets.

Heel Lifts (Relevé in Ballet)



1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and toes pointing forward.

2. Slowly rise onto the balls of your feet, keeping your legs straight as you lift your heels as high as you can, engaging your calves, thighs, and glutes.

3. Hold the raised position and squeeze your calf muscles.

4. Lower your heels back down slowly, controlling your descent. Repeat five to ten times.

Single Limb Stance



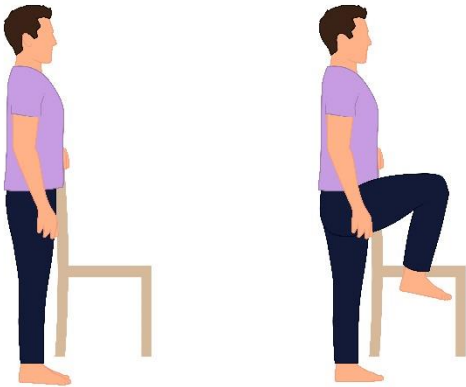
1. Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding onto a chair or wall for support if needed. Keep your sternum lifted and your shoulders wide.

2. Gently engage the abdominal (stomach), thigh and glute muscles on the standing leg. Then, bend the knee on the other leg and lift the foot behind you. Balance on the standing leg.

3. Hold all the core muscles tight – abdominals from the pubic bone to the sternum, the glutes, and the back muscles – relax the trapezius and neck muscles. Breathe evenly in and out for 10-15 seconds, then switch to the other leg.

4. Perform 3-5 repetitions on each leg, aiming for two to three sets.

Standing Knee Lifts



1. Stand with both feet hip-width apart. You can use a chair for support if desired by standing with the back of the chair facing your right side. Hold onto the chair with your right hand.
2. Stand firmly on both feet, with the abdominals and glutes gently engaged. Bend your left knee and lift it forward and up to the waist or higher, whatever level is comfortable for you. Keep all the core muscles engaged.
3. If you want to add challenge, grab the front of the knee with your left hand to help hold it up. Gently pull your knee up and in towards your chest on the exhale.
4. To further challenge yourself, let go of the chair. To balance without support requires keeping all the core muscles engaged (back, right glute, and deep abdominal muscles). Stay for three to five inhales and exhales to build strength in your core.
5. **REPEAT WITH THE RIGHT KNEE.** Hold onto the chair with your left hand if desired. Stay for three to five inhales and exhales.
6. Again, to challenge yourself, let go of the chair. Keep all the core muscles working (back, left glute, and abdominal muscles). Stay for three to five inhales and exhales to build more core strength.

Standing Leg Circles



1. Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding onto a chair or wall for support if needed.
2. Tighten the abdominal (stomach) muscles and tighten the thigh and glute muscles on the standing leg. Then, lift one leg slightly off the ground, point your toes, and make small circles with your entire leg. Hold all the core muscles tight and breathe evenly in and out as you circle the leg.
3. Perform 5-10 circles in one direction, then reverse to the other direction.
4. Lower that leg back down and repeat the exercise on the other side.
5. Perform two to three sets on each leg. Keep the glute and abdominals engaged so you don't sink into the hip of the standing leg.

Yoga Poses for Balance

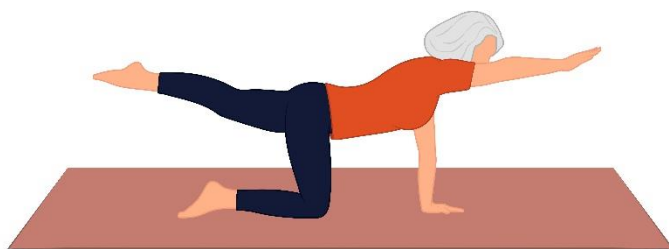
Yoga Tree Pose



1. Begin standing with your feet hip-width apart and your arms by your sides.
 2. Shift your weight onto your left foot. Immediately tighten the left glute, left thigh, and abdominal muscles. Be sure to lift in the upper back and keep the shoulders over your rib cage rather than leaning backwards or forwards. Then, lift your right foot off the ground.
 3. Put your right foot's sole on your inner left calf or thigh. Where you put your foot isn't as important as continuing to engage all the core and thigh muscles.
- This is a powerful core strengthening pose.
4. Press your foot into your leg and your leg into your foot, to help find your balance. If you start to tilt to one side, mentally check in and see if you've stopped tightening your left glute or have let go of your stomach muscles. Focus on the sensation in your core muscles, noticing where your core feels weak, and intentionally working those vital muscles.

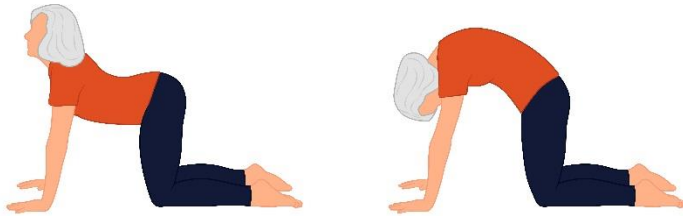
5. Bring your palms together in front of your heart in a prayer position, or extend your arms overhead like branches.
6. Hold the pose for 30 seconds to 1 minute, then exhale to lower your foot and hands back to your side. Switch your weight into the left foot and do it on the other side, paying close attention to engaging the abdominals, the right glute, and the right thigh throughout.

Yoga Bird Dog Pose (Same as Opposite Arm and Leg Raise with more challenge) – Challenging Exercise



1. Begin on your hands and knees in a tabletop position, with your wrists aligned under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
2. Extend your right arm forward. Tighten your abdominals, then tighten your left glute and thigh as you extend your left leg back, parallel to the ground, keeping your hips level. (You may keep both hands on the floor if you cannot maintain your balance with it extended).
3. To stabilize your body, we use all the core, keeping your abdominals, left glute, and left thigh tight, and your right biceps, triceps, and deltoids tight. Avoid arching your back by keeping the abdominals engaged and lifting your hips.
4. OPTIONAL: Hold the pose for a few breaths, then inhale and pull your left knee forward and bring it towards your right elbow underneath your body. Exhale and extend both arm and leg. Repeat 4 to 8 times. Keep all the abdominals, back, and right glute muscles engaged/tight throughout the entire exercise.
5. Repeat on the opposite side, extending your left arm forward and your right leg back to start, all core muscles engaged throughout. Do 4 to 8 repetitions of left elbow towards right knee.
6. Be aware that this may be very hard to do at first. It is also OK to keep both hands on the floor and just extend a leg, focusing on keeping the abdominals, glutes, and thighs tight. Advance to drawing one knee in under the body and putting it back, then do the other knee, 4 to 8 times each side. This is excellent for strengthening the whole core.

Yoga Cat-Cow



This is an excellent pose to relax the back after all your exercises and after any strenuous back activities.

1. Start on your hands and knees in a tabletop position, with your wrists aligned under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
2. Inhale slowly as you arch your back, dropping your belly towards the floor, lifting your tailbone and your head towards the ceiling, gazing up (Cow Pose).
3. Exhale slowly as you round your back, first tucking your tail bone under, then up the back one vertebra at a time until you tuck your chin towards your chest while drawing in your belly button (Cat Pose).
4. Flow smoothly between Cat and Cow Poses, syncing your movements with slow, even inhales and exhales.
5. Repeat for 5-10 rounds, focusing on creating fluid movement and connecting with your breath.

Yoga Puppy Pose for Relaxing the Back



1. Start on your hands and knees on the floor with a flat back in a tabletop position, with your wrists aligned under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.
2. Walk forward with your hands and lower your chest and forehead to the floor. As you do that, position your hips over your knees.
3. Keep your arms extended and your palms flat on the mat or place your forearms on the ground for a deeper stretch.
4. Relax your neck and allow your chest to melt toward the floor, feeling a stretch through your spine and shoulders.

5. Hold the pose for 30 seconds to 1 minute, focusing on the slow, even flow of your breathing.

Using the "MOVE" Method to Incorporate Stretches Into Your Routine

Stretching isn't just about touching your toes; it's about releasing tension, stiffness, and stress in your muscles so that your body and mind relax and you feel more open and at ease. Core strengthening and Balance exercises come much more easily as we increase flexibility. Altogether, incorporating the 'MOVE' method into your routine, you can integrate stretches, core strengthening, and balance into your daily activities. Doing even small amounts of exercise in each area every day will build the balance we seek and releases endorphins in the brain at the same time, making both the body and mind feel good! In time, your body will be eager to stretch, strengthen, and balance - it becomes a way of life!

- **Mobility:** Start by becoming aware throughout your day of when your body feels tight or stiff or your mind feels stressed. Then stop your old routine and allow yourself to stretch. Whether you're getting ready in the morning, shopping at the grocery store, standing and waiting in a line, sitting and waiting in the doctor's office, or simply chatting with a friend, find moments to do some stretching. You can just roll your shoulders, lean to the side, do a standing cat-cow, or do any stretch that relaxes the shoulders, back, hips, legs, or feet. It's all about finding opportunities throughout the day to make positive changes in your physical and mental comfort zone.
- **Optimization:** Choose ten favorite exercises that target different parts of your body, starting from your neck and shoulders and working your way down to your feet. Integrate these stretches into your daily routine, gradually adding more as you become more comfortable. *Remember: awareness, acceptance, and action*—it's important to pay attention to how your body feels and accept where you are stiff or tight in certain areas—everybody is! Then, be kind to your body and stretch, but never force yourself into painful movements. Focus on gentle stretches and slow, inhaled and exhaled for mindful breathing to reap the full benefits. *Remember to consult your physician before starting an exercise program to be sure it is safe for you to do so.*
- **Vitality:** Prioritize stretching as the exercises to start with. This prepares your muscles for movement and helps protect you from injury. Engage in mindful breathing with slow inhaled and exhaled. On your exhale, put your mind into the muscle you are stretching and consciously relax it to deepen your stretch and

enhance relaxation. Do not bounce as this makes the muscle contract and tighten. Stretching with a friend, family member, or even your furry companion can add an element of joy and connection to your routine. Be like your cat or dog; they stretch whenever they feel the need, often when they get up from a nap and want to start moving. Let stretching be a delightful experience for both the body and the soul.

- **Empowerment:** Acknowledge yourself for stretching for a week, a month, or longer by noticing how much better you feel in your body. Recognize that it is a great achievement to feel more able to move with comfort, safety, and an awake mind. Every stretch you do is a step towards greater flexibility and vitality. Allow yourself to feel empowered by the improvements you notice in your body and mind. You may feel confident enough to try an actual yoga class as a result. Embrace the journey of self-care and self-discovery, knowing that each stretch is creating and releasing your best self.

Now, equipped with a newfound understanding of the mind-body connection through stretching, you're ready to embark on the next phase of your wellness journey. In Chapter 6, we'll explore times of day and activities when you can do exercises throughout your real life and daily activities (like your cat or dog do!) making flexibility, core strength, and the resulting balance your new way of life!

Review Request Page

You've read this far and now ask yourself,

What did I like best so far? What did I learn that may have raised my awareness and will help my balance and happiness – physically, mentally, or emotionally? Do I know people whose health and happiness I care about a lot or even at an acquaintance level, but know it would be helpful to them? And there is a LOT more in the coming Chapters you will like including specific Exercise routines and new ideas to help your mind.

So, what if you could help reach a senior who might consider changing their habits, improving their lives through easy exercise or just plain movement? And you don't need to sign up for anything or pledge any money or do anything more than **leave a positive REVIEW.**

I am an avid review reader. Before I purchase something, I love to read reviews, find out what others really found helpful, or well done, or meaningful. How about you? Read reviews before you buy? Seniors need your reviews or ***Balance for Seniors*** won't show up on Amazon high enough in the list for them to know it exists! That's how Amazon works.

So, please take **just five** minutes max to let others know this book is worth buying and reading – whether a paperback or an eBook – help others get the knowledge about aging that motivates them to act and get healthy, happy, and long life in our senior years. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH** for helping to reach others in need, fulfilling my passion, and giving you the gratification of helping others to be more joyful in their senior years.

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EASY, FAST, BUT SO VERY IMPACTFUL! Pass it forward! Feel good that somewhere, some senior has been moved to take self-care action because of you!