

Keep Your Body Moving

If you have arthritis, exercise is an important part of staying healthy. You can use the exercises detailed here to keep your body moving and help improve lower body strength, flexibility, and balance.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED, BE SURE TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT WHICH OF THESE EXERCISES MAY BE RIGHT FOR YOU.

Lower Body Strength*

Back Leg Raises



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. Your standing leg should be slightly bent
3. Hold position for 1 second
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg

Side Leg Raises



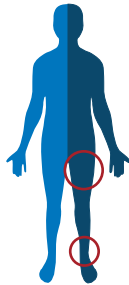
1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg out to the side. Keep your back straight and your toes facing forward. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent
3. Hold position for 1 second
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg

*Adapted from the article "Exercises to Try – Improve Your Strength" part of Go4Life, the exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH, and NIHSeniorHealth.gov.

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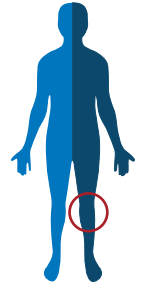


Flexibility†



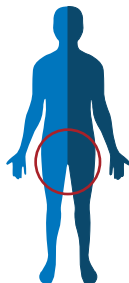
Hamstring and Ankle Stretch

1. Sit on the edge of a chair with your right leg extended, right heel on floor
2. Flex right foot and toes
3. Gently lean forward from your hips and hold for 10 to 60 seconds to stretch the back of your thigh



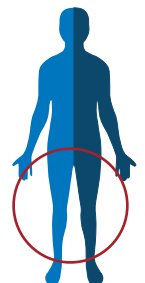
Calf Stretch

1. Stand up straight, holding onto a chair or some other stable object
2. Put left leg behind you, keeping left heel on the floor
3. Bend right knee and lean toward the chair, holding for 10 to 60 seconds. You should feel the stretch in the calf of your left leg
4. Repeat with right leg



Groin Stretch

1. Stand with legs slightly wider than shoulder-width and hold onto a stable object like a chair
2. With left foot facing forward, point right foot 45 degrees to the right, then lunge to the right without letting your knee go past your toes
3. Repeat move on left side



Leg Swings

1. Stand up straight, holding onto a stable object like a chair with your left hand for support
2. Standing to the right side of the chair on your left leg, move your right leg to the front, side, and back, tapping your toe at each point
3. Repeat with left leg

†Adapted from the article "Stretches for Before and After Walking." For more information on this topic, visit www.arthritistoday.org.



Balance[‡]

Standing on One Foot



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

Walking Heel to Toe



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
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

Balance Walk



1. Raise arms to sides, 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 in front of the other
4. As you walk, lift your back leg. Pause for 1 second before stepping forward
5. Repeat for 20 steps, alternating legs

When creating an exercise plan, choose activities that you enjoy and can do regularly. Try new exercises on alternate days to keep things interesting.

And remember, every little bit adds up!

[‡]Adapted from the article "Balance Exercises" part of Go4Life, the exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH, and NIHSeniorHealth.gov.

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