



# Level 1 Exercises for Strength & Balance

A resource for care homes in NHS Forth Valley  
by Matthew Gallagher



## **Exercise guide**

To start with, try each exercise 2 or 3 times and slowly increase the repetitions as you build strength and confidence. For example, in a couple of days you might repeat each exercise 5 times, working up to 10 repetitions in a couple of week's time.

After this time you'll notice the difference, you'll see your balance and strength improving, and feel ready to join a group or class to build on these exercises.

## **Handholds**

When using a chair or kitchen counter for support, you could start by either:

- Holding on quite firmly
- Touching the chair or table with a finger.

If you're feeling particularly confident, hold your hand just above, but have a chair nearby just in case.

## **Support**

You will need support when doing these exercises so find something in your house that's safe and secure for you to hold on to. Your kitchen counter or a solid chair is good.

## **Balance test**

To find out which level to start on, try standing on one leg for 30 seconds while holding on to a chair or table for support. When you're ready, try to let go:

- if you are unable to stand for 30 seconds with support then you should start with the **Seated/Bed Exercise Programme**
- if you don't feel confident enough to let go, or wobble or have to put a foot down quickly if you do, you should start on **Level 1**
- if you have to occasionally hold on or put a foot down, but only occasionally, you can start on **Level 2**
- if can manage the full 30 seconds without holding on or putting your foot down, you can start on **Level 3**

## Easy marching

Easy marching is a good way to warm up, and keep your circulation flowing, before any exercise.

To easy march:

1. Place your feet hip-width apart, relax your body and keep your shoulders down.
2. Start to walk on the spot.
3. As you walk, make sure you put the ball of your foot down first through to the heel.
4. If you feel confident, take your hand off the chair.

As you warm up, you may feel that you want to raise your knees a little bit higher for a more purposeful march.

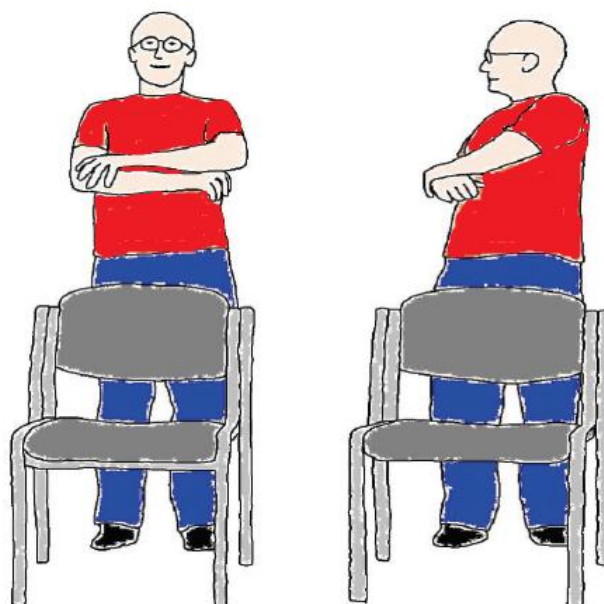


## Trunk movements

Trunk movements help to improve the flexibility of your spine.

To do these movements:

1. Place your feet hip-width apart, and keep your shoulders nice and relaxed.
2. Gently fold your arms in front of you and grow tall.
3. Slowly look over one of your shoulders, making sure your hips stay pointing forward.
4. Repeat this up to 10 times.



## Front knee strengtheners

Knee strengthening exercises will help you to maintain strength in the muscle at the front of your leg.

To strengthen the knee:

1. Sit firmly in the back of a chair, keep your shoulders down and maintain good posture.
2. With or without an ankle weight, slowly extend your leg in front of you.
3. Repeat up to 10 times on each leg.



## Side hip-strengthening

Hip-strengthening exercises can help to build good leg muscle strength, which will help you get out of the car, or bath, more easily.

To strengthen your hip:

1. Place your feet hip-width apart and hold on for support.
2. With or without an ankle weight, slowly take the leg out to the side. Keep looking forward and keep a good posture.
3. Hold it for a count of 4 or 5 seconds.



## Calf or heel raises

Calf or heel raises help to build strength in your ankles. Strong ankles are important as they're first thing that keeps us upright.

To do a calf or heel raise:

1. Slowly rise up onto the balls of your feet, with your weight on the big toe and the second toe.
2. Hold for a count of 4 or 5 seconds.
3. Return to standing in a controlled manner, and try not to rock.



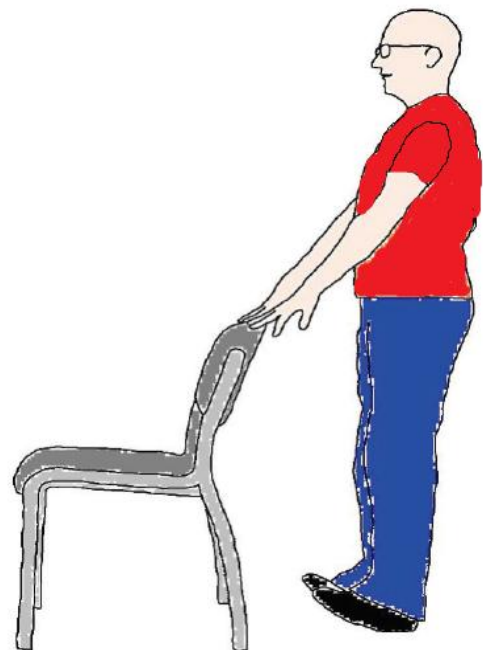
## Toe raises

Toe raises can help to strengthen the muscles at the front of our feet, which are often weak. These muscles are important as they help to lift our feet over obstacles.

To do a toe raise:

1. Hold on to a chair or table for support, and stand tall with good posture.
2. Slowly bring your toes up towards your nose. You may not have quite this level of flexibility, but try to raise them as far as you can.

Each time you do this; keep your stomach muscles tight and your bottom in. It's normal to wobble as you practice toe raises.



## Sit to stand

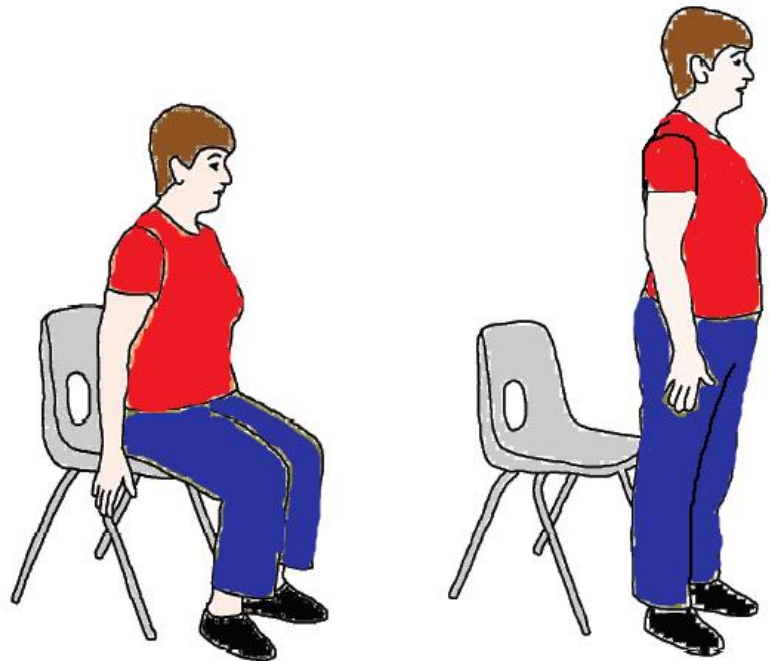
Moving from sitting to standing is a core exercise that will help to improve your strength and balance. You can do this anywhere in your home, but make sure you've got a solid chair.

There are 3 handholds, you could either:

- push firmly on the arms of the chair
- have a light fingertip touch
- fold your arms and let your legs do all the work, if you're more confident.

To sit to stand:

1. Sit forward from the back of the chair to work the back muscles. Make sure you've got good posture and that your toes are back under your knees.
2. Slowly stand up, moving your feet a little bit to get the blood flowing again.
3. Slowly sit back again with control.
4. Repeat up to 5 times.



As you repeat these, you'll find that your leg muscles start to get quite warm and perhaps a little bit tense. That's quite normal and shows that it's working the muscles.