



Level 2 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.

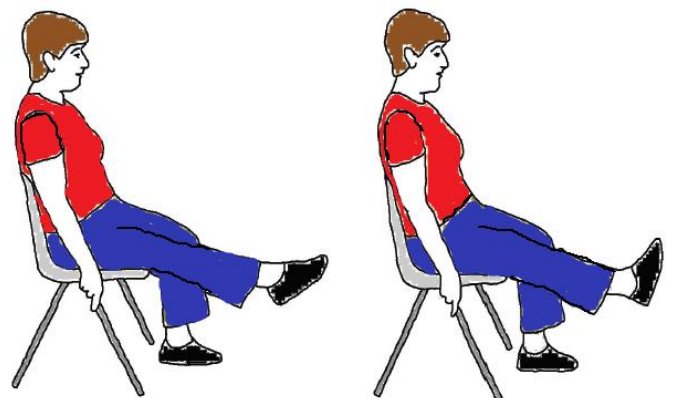


Ankle movements

It's important to maintain flexibility at the ankles, so you can cope with uneven pavements.

To move the ankles:

1. Sit at the back of a chair with your back supported and make sure you're sitting tall.
2. Lift your leg and slowly pull your toes towards your knee.
3. Slowly push your toes away from you and, in a slow and controlled manner, move your toes forward and back to increase the range of motion.
4. Repeat this up to 10 times on each leg.

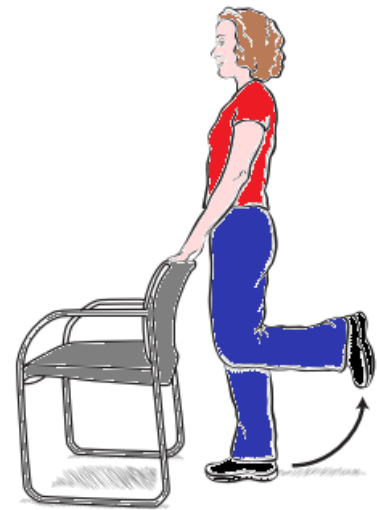


Back knee strengthening

Knee strengthening exercises will help you to maintain strength in the muscle at the back of your leg. This exercise can be done with or without ankle weights. Hold on to a chair or counter to make sure your balance is good.

To strengthen the knee:

1. Stand up tall and pull your leg backwards a touch so that one knee is behind the other but the toe remains on the floor.
2. Slowly lift the heel towards the ceiling.
3. Hold for a slow count of 4.



Knee bends

Knee bends work the muscles at the front of your thigh. Hold on to a chair or counter for support.

To do a knee bend:

1. Place your feet hip-width apart, stand up tall and make sure your posture is good.
2. Bend both knees, making sure that they don't go too far forward and you don't bend too low. Try to keep looking forward as you do this.
3. Hold for a slow count of 4 or 5, and then rise up again.
4. Repeat up to 10 times.



Heel-toe standing

An effective way to improve balance is to reduce the base of support (the amount of space that your feet take up on the floor). When practising heel-toe standing, make sure that you hold on to a chair or counter to start with. If you can, try to reduce your handhold so that the hand is just above the chair.

To do heel-toe standing:

1. Grow tall, and bring one foot in front of the other, touching heel to toe.
2. Transfer your weight so that it's equal on both feet.
3. Hold for a slow count of 5.
4. Repeat up to 10 times.

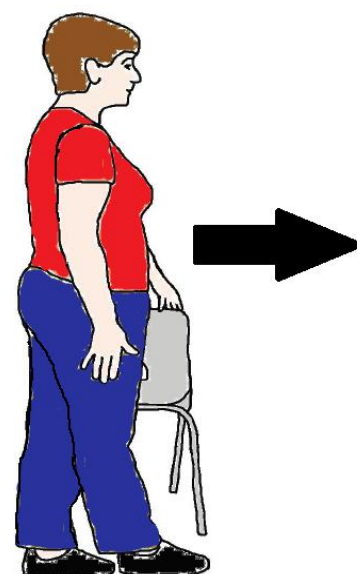


Heel-toe walking

Heel-toe walking builds on heel-toe standing by including a movement forward. When practising heel-toe walking, make sure that you hold on to a chair or counter to start with.

To do heel-toe walking:

1. Stand up tall and keep looking forward
2. Slowly move one foot in front of the other so that the heel touches the toe. Make sure you've got your weight evenly distributed before you start the next step.
3. If you can, take your hand off the chair, but keep it nearby for support.
4. Progress to doing about 10 of these steps.



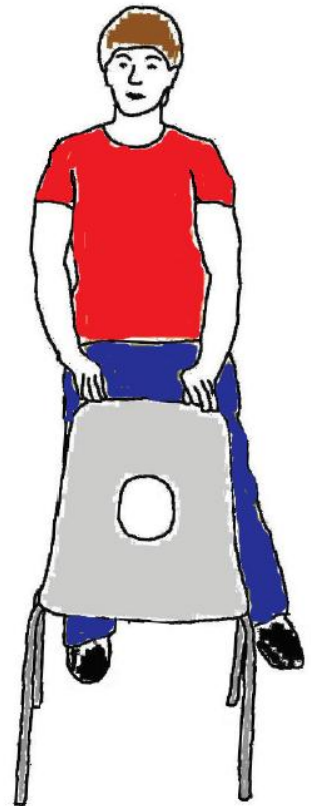
Sideways walking

Sideways walking is another important balance exercise.

To do a sideways walk:

1. Place your feet hip-width apart, stand up tall and hold on to something firm.
2. Take one foot out to the side and put the toe down before the heel. Try to keep looking forward. As you bring the other leg to join it, keep a gap between the legs.
3. Depending on the amount of space you've got, keep moving to the left and then right until you've done about 10 steps. If you can, reduce the handhold over time.

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Sit to stand

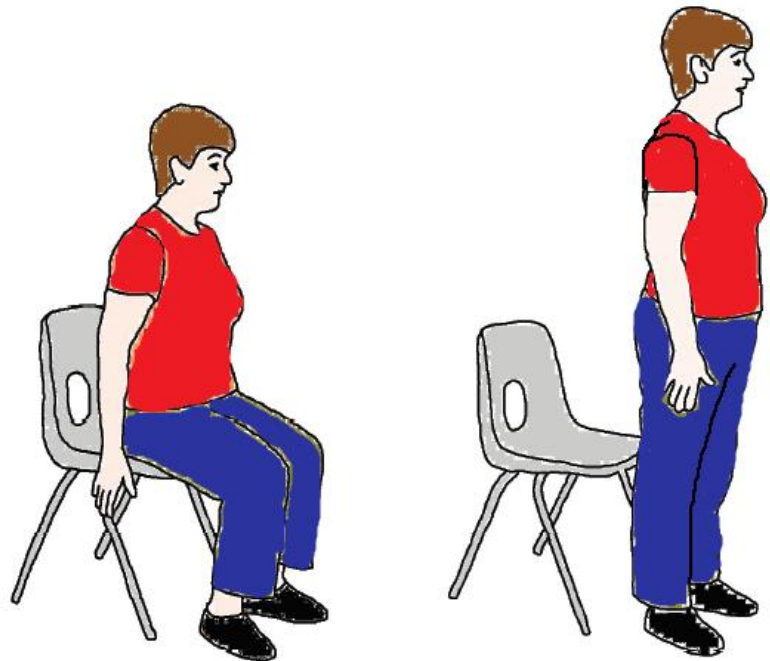
Moving from sitting to standing is a core exercise that will help to improve your strength and balance. You can do this anywhere in your home, but make sure you've got a solid chair.

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.