



Level 3 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.

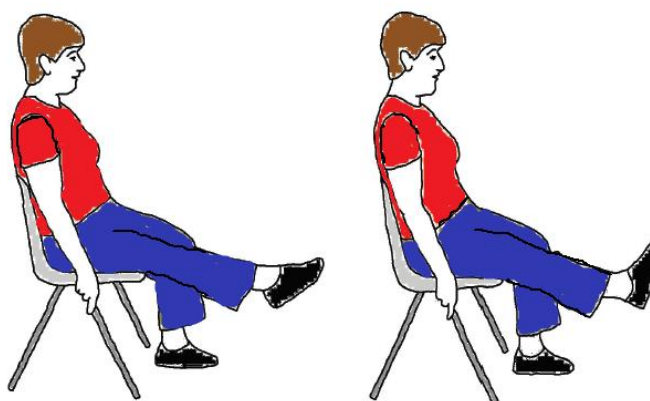


Ankle movements

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.



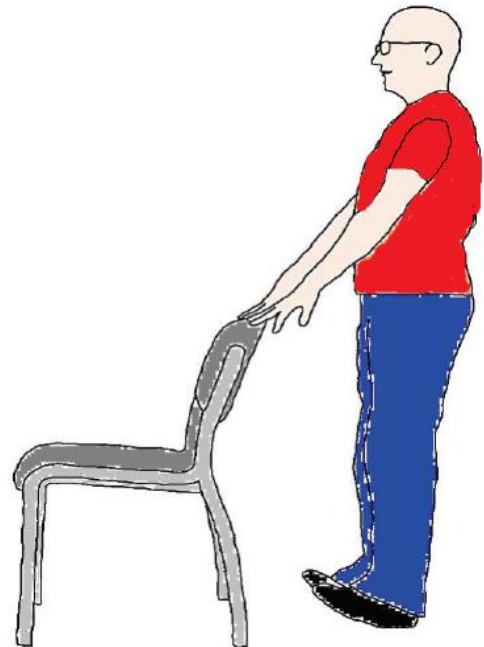
Toe raises

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.

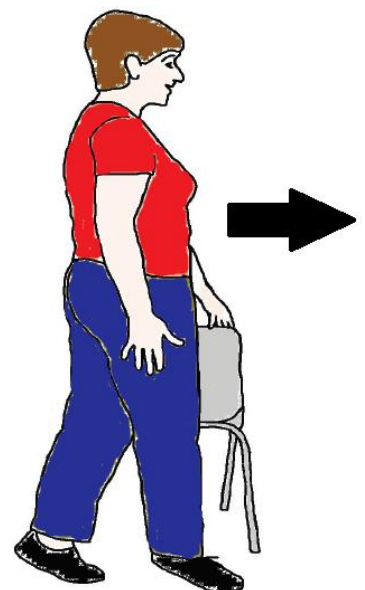


Toe walking

Toe walking is another important balance exercise.

To toe walk:

1. Start by growing tall and make sure you've got something to hold on to.
2. Pull your tummy muscles in and move slowly up on to your toes.
3. When you're steady, take small, controlled steps on your toes. Try to keep the weight on your big toe and second toe. Look forward as you step.
4. Bring your heels down, turn towards your support then turn around and go in the opposite direction.
5. Aim to do 10 steps in both directions.

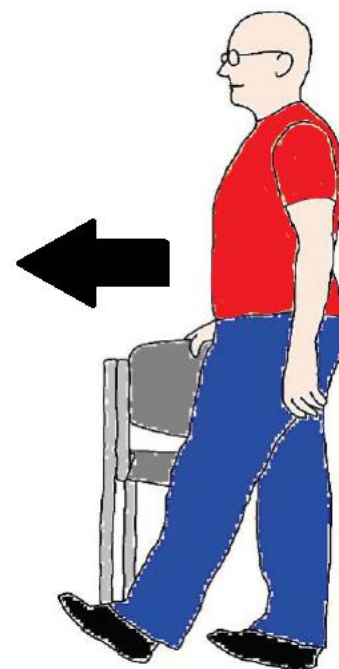


Heel walking

This balance exercise is a bit more difficult. Make sure that you've got a good solid support to hold on to.

To heel walk:

1. Standing tall, pull your toes up towards your nose, keeping your tummy tight and your bottom in.
2. Take small, controlled steps on your heels, looking forward as you step. This can be difficult but try as hard as you can to raise the toes up and keep them up during the walking.
3. Turn towards your support, then turn around and go in the opposite direction.
4. Aim to do 10 steps in each direction, reducing your handhold over time.



Sit to stand

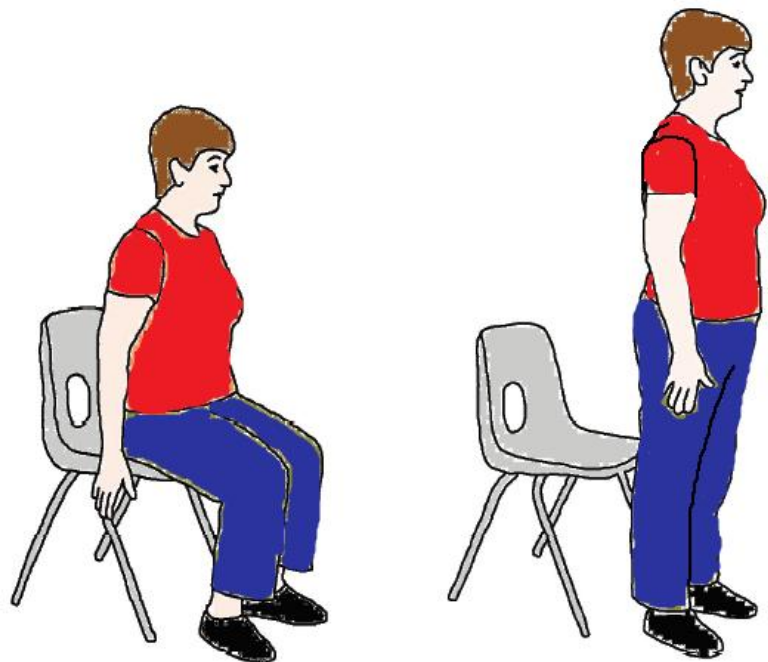
Moving from sitting to standing is a core exercise that will help to improve your strength and balance. You can do this anywhere in your home, but make sure you've got a solid chair.

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.