Workout **to Go**

A Sample Exercise Routine from the National Institute on Aging at NIH

Go4Life®

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Are you just starting to exercise? Getting back into a routine after a break? Wanting to keep up your physical activities away from home? The 13 exercises in this sample workout can help. In this booklet, you'll find easy-to-follow strength, balance, and flexibility exercises that you can do anytime, anywhere.

One of the great things about physical activity is that there are so many ways to be active. This workout is only one of them. The secret to success is to be creative, find activities you enjoy, and keep going.

This sample workout is part of ***Go4Life***, an outreach campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH to help you fit exercise and physical activity into your daily life. For more exercises, motivational tips, real-life success stories, and other free materials, visit our website:

www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life

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Get Ready

Before you begin, here are a few things to keep in mind.

- **Safety always comes first.**
  If you haven't had regular checkups, you might want to talk with your doctor about your workout plans. Ask if there are any reasons to modify your program or adjust the exercises to do them safely. Always listen to your body and do what you can as long as you're comfortable.

- **Drink plenty of water.**
  Unless your doctor has asked you to limit fluids, be sure to drink water when you exercise. Many older adults don't feel thirsty even when their body needs fluids.

- **Wear comfortable clothes.**
  Be sure to wear clothes that let you move freely.

Get Set

For the workout, you'll need two tennis balls, a sturdy chair with arms, a towel, and two equally weighted objects—like hand or wrist weights, soup cans, or water bottles. You may need to use 1- or 2-pound weights when starting out. As the exercises become easier, gradually add more weight.

You will start the sample workout by warming up. Then, move on to the strength and balance exercises. For each exercise, we show one set of 10-15 repetitions. Try doing 3 sets, and then cool down with the flexibility exercises.

WHAT YOU NEED

Safety Tips

- **Breathe regularly during strength exercises.**
  For example, breathe out as you lift the weight, and breathe in as you relax. When doing leg lifts, breathe out as you lift your leg and breathe in as you lower it.

- **Use smooth, steady movements when lifting weights.**
  To prevent injury, don't jerk or thrust weights into position.

- **Keep your arm and leg joints slightly bent.**
  Avoid "locking" your arm and leg joints in a tightly straightened position.

- **Choose a sturdy chair with arms.**
  Make sure the chair is stable enough to support you when seated or when holding on during the exercise.

- **Make slow, steady movements.**
  Never "bounce" into a stretch.

- **Always bend forward from the hips, not the waist.**
  If you keep your back straight, you're bending the right way.

- **Stop if you feel pain.**
  You might feel some soreness after you exercise, but exercise should not hurt or make you feel really tired. In fact, in many ways, being active will probably make you feel better.

WARM UP

It's important to spend about 5 minutes at the beginning of your routine to warm up. Warming up gives your muscles a chance to get ready to work. Warm-up activities can help you prevent injury and reduce muscle soreness later.

Suggestions

- Take a walk.
- Ride a bike.
- Dance around your living room or kitchen.
- Walk up and down the stairs a few times.

STRENGTH EXERCISES

Hand Grip

1. Hold a tennis ball in each hand.
2. Slowly squeeze the ball as hard as you can and hold it for 3-5 seconds.
3. Relax the squeeze slowly.
4. Repeat 10-15 times.

Wall Push-Up

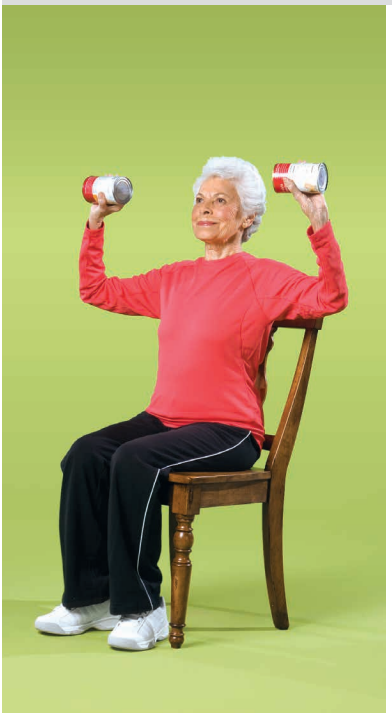
1. Face a wall, standing a little farther than arm's length away, feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly bend your elbows and lower your upper body toward the wall. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
4. Hold the position for 1 second.
5. Slowly push yourself back until your arms are straight.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.

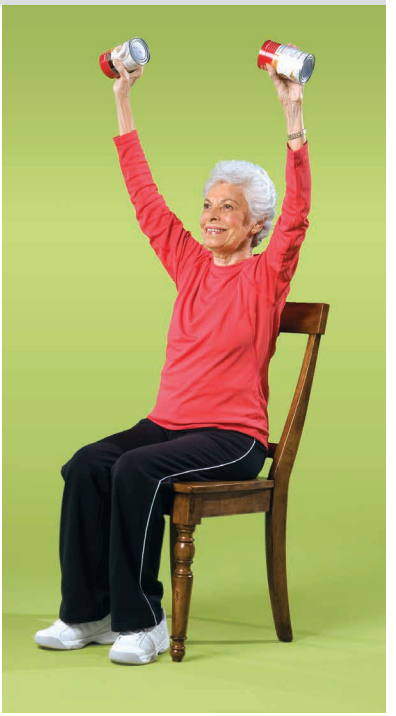
Overhead Arm Raise

You can do this exercise while standing or sitting with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.

1. Hold weights at your sides at shoulder height with palms facing forward.
2. Slowly raise both arms up over your head keeping your elbows slightly bent.
3. Hold the position for 1 second.
4. Slowly lower your arms.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.

TIP: *As you progress, use a heavier weight and alternate arms until you can lift the weight comfortably with both arms.*





Back Leg Raise

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance.
2. Slowly lift one leg straight back without bending your knee or pointing your toes. Try not to lean forward. The leg you're standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold the position for 1 second.
4. Slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with the other leg.

TIP: *As you progress, you may want to add ankle weights. You also can challenge yourself to improve your balance (see page 14).*

Side Leg Raise

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance.
2. Slowly lift one leg out to the side. Keep your back straight and your toes facing forward. The leg you're standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold the position for 1 second.
4. Slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with the other leg.

TIP: *As you progress, you may want to add ankle weights. You also can challenge yourself to improve your balance (see page 14).*

Toe Stand

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, feet shoulder-width apart, holding on for balance.
2. Slowly stand on tiptoes as high as possible.
3. Hold the position for 1 second.
4. Slowly lower heels to the floor.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.

TIP: *As you progress, try doing the exercise standing on one leg at a time for a total of 10-15 times on each leg. You also can challenge yourself to improve your balance (see page 14).*

BALANCE EXERCISES

Stand on One Foot

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

TIP: *As you progress, you can also challenge yourself to improve your balance (see page 14).*

Heel-to-Toe Walk

If you are unsteady on your feet, try doing this exercise near a wall so you can steady yourself if you need to.

1. Place the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of the other foot so that they touch or almost touch. Raise arms to your sides, shoulder height.
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 your other foot.
4. Repeat for 20 steps.

Balance Walk

1. Raise arms to your 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.

TIP: *As you progress, try looking from side to side as you walk, but skip this step if you have inner-ear problems.*

CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO IMPROVE YOUR BALANCE

Exercises to strengthen your legs and ankles also can help improve your balance. As you progress, try adding these challenges to help even more.

- Start by holding on to a study chair with both hands for support.
- To challenge yourself further, try holding on with only one hand.
- As you feel steady, use just one finger for balance, or try the exercises without holding on.
- When you are steady on your feet, try doing the exercises with your eyes closed.

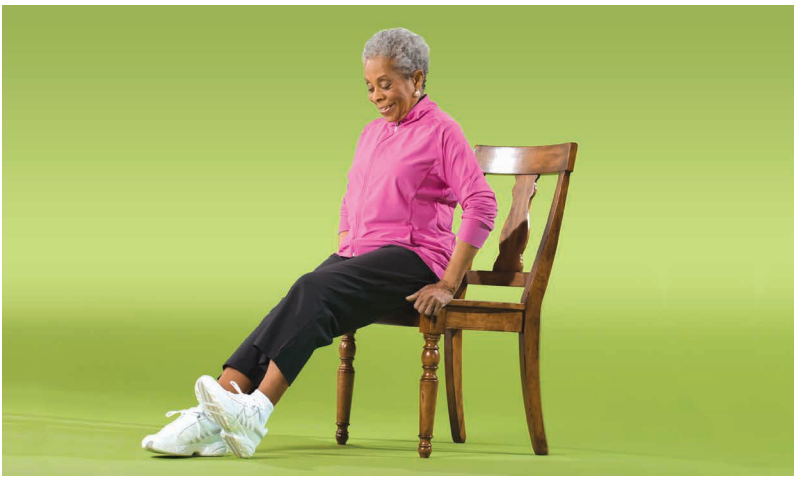
COOL DOWN

Cooling down at the end of your workout gives your muscles a chance to gradually return to rest. Again, this is important to prevent injury. To cool down, take about 5 minutes to do the following 4 flexibility exercises.

FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

Ankles

1. Sit securely toward the edge of a sturdy chair.
2. Stretch your legs out in front of you.
3. With your heels on the floor, bend your ankles to point toes toward you.
4. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Bend ankles to point toes away from you and hold for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat 3-5 times.



Back

If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.

1. Sit toward the front of a sturdy chair with armrests, with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Stay as straight as possible.
2. Slowly twist to the left from your waist without moving your hips. Turn your head to the left. Lift your left hand and hold on to the left arm of the chair. Place your right hand on the outside of your left thigh.
3. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds. Slowly return to face forward.
4. Repeat 3-5 times. Reverse positions and repeat 3-5 times on the right side.

TIP: *As you progress, try lifting your left arm and resting it comfortably on the back of the chair. Hold on to the left armrest with your right arm. Repeat on your right side.*

Thigh

If you've had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before doing this stretch.

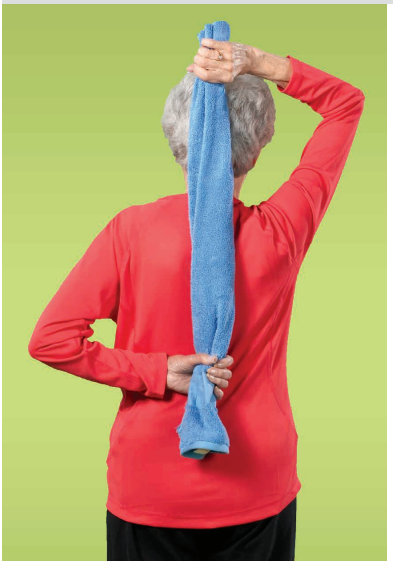
1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and knees straight, but not locked.
2. Hold on to the chair for balance with your right hand.
3. Bend your left leg back and grab your foot in your left hand. Keep your knee pointed to the floor. If you can't grab your ankle, loop a resistance band, belt, or towel around your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat 3-5 times.
7. Repeat 3-5 times with your right leg.

Shoulder and Upper Arm

If you have shoulder problems, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold one end of a towel in your right hand.
3. Raise and bend your right arm to drape the towel down your back.
4. Reach behind your lower back and grasp the towel with your left hand.
5. Pull the towel down with your left hand. Stop when you feel a stretch in your right shoulder.
6. Repeat 3-5 times.
7. Reverse positions and repeat 3-5 times to stretch your left shoulder.

TIP: *As you progress, try pulling the towel down farther, but not so far that it hurts.*



PROGRESSING

You should begin to feel stronger and more energetic once you start exercising regularly. The exercises will get easier. This tells you that your body is getting used to a higher level of activity, and it's time to build on those benefits by doing more.

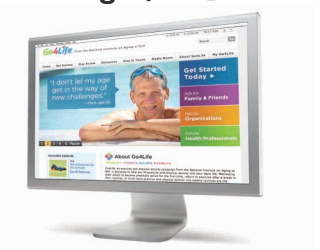
Gradually increase the amount of weight you use to build strength, try some of the challenges on page 14 to improve your balance, or reach farther in your stretching exercises.

Don't forget to congratulate yourself on your efforts. You've made great progress and you're ready to do more!

Find Out More

For more information on how to exercise safely, check out the following **FREE** resources from ***Go4Life***, the exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH.

- **Visit the *Go4Life* website at www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life**
  Be part of the ***Go4Life*** Team. Use ***My Go4Life*** to make your own exercise plan and track your progress, share your success story, and check out other free resources.



- ***Exercise & Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging***
  This easy-to-read print book, available in English and Spanish, has additional sample exercises, worksheets to help you track your progress, tips on healthy eating, real-life success stories, and more ideas to encourage you to exercise safely and build up the benefits.

- ***Go4Life Everyday Exercises from the National Institute on Aging* (DVD)**
  Join personal trainer Sandy Magrath and friends as they show you how to do strength, balance, and flexibility exercises. This DVD features exercises you can do at home, at work, in the gym, almost anywhere. Mix and match them. Be creative and have fun!

Designed to fit easily into your purse or travel bag, *Workout to Go* can help you stay in shape for the activities you enjoy most—biking, dancing, working in the garden, or playing with your grandchildren. You can do these easy-to-follow strength, balance, and flexibility exercise anytime, anywhere!

"I love living life to its fullest, but with my family responsibilities and my volunteer work, life can get pretty hectic. This wonderful Go4Life resource helps me stay fit and exercise safely. And what's great is I can do these exercises wherever I happen to be."

—Pat Lynch, age 60

"As a doctor, I'm an ardent believer in exercise and eating well. Several years ago, I started doing daily strength and balance exercises as recommended in the exercise guide from the National Institute on Aging at NIH. These simple exercises help me maintain my active lifestyle."

—Samarendra Dutta, MD, PhD, age 87

National Institute on Aging

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