

Exercises for older people



Balance

Getting started

If you've not done much physical activity for a while, you may want to get the all-clear from a GP before starting.

For the exercises that require a chair, choose one that is stable, solid and without wheels. You should be able to sit with feet flat on the floor and knees bent at right angles. Avoid chairs with arms as this will restrict your movement.

Wear loose, comfortable clothing and keep some water handy.

Try to attempt these exercises at least twice a week, this will help to improve muscle strength, balance and co-ordination.

Build up slowly and aim to increase the repetitions of each exercise over time.

As your fitness improves, why not look for a group session near you? Age UK have lots of ideas. www.ageuk.org.uk

There are three other sets of exercises in this series: Sitting, Flexibility and Strength.
Go to www.nhs.uk/exercises-for-older-people to download.



SIDEWAYS WALKING



- A.** Stand with your feet together, knees slightly bent.
- B.** Step sideways in a slow and controlled manner, moving one foot to the side first.
- C.** Move the other to join it.

Avoid dropping your hips as you step. Perform 10 steps each way or step from one side of the room to the other.

SIMPLE GRAPEVINE



This involves walking sideways by crossing one foot over the other.

- A.** Start by crossing your right foot over your left.
- B.** Bring your left foot to join it.

Attempt five cross steps on each side.

If necessary, put your fingers against a wall for stability.

The smaller the step, the more you work on your balance.

HEEL TO TOE WALK



- A.** Standing upright, place your right heel on the floor directly in front of your left toe.

- B.** Then do the same with your left heel. Make sure you keep looking forwards at all times.

If necessary, put your fingers against a wall for stability.

Try to perform at least five steps. As you progress, move away from the wall.



ONE LEG STAND



A. Start by standing facing the wall, with arms outstretched and your fingertips touching the wall.

B. Lift your left leg, keep your hips level and keep a slight bend in the opposite leg. Gently place your foot back on the floor.

Hold the lift for five to 10 seconds and perform three on each side.

STEP UP



Use a step, preferably with a railing or near a wall to use as support.

A. Step up with your right leg.

B. Bring your left leg up to join it.

C. Step down again and return to the start position.

The key for building balance is to step up and down slowly and in a controlled manner. Perform up to five steps with each leg.