



# Active at Home

with Active Norfolk

## Gentle Home Exercises

Taking regular gentle exercise can help you to improve and maintain good physical and mental health.

This booklet contains a selection of gentle exercises that can be done at home.

# Reasons to get active

Gentle exercises and activities that get your body moving will help to improve your strength, balance, flexibility and coordination.

These can all help keep you able to do your daily activities and reduce the risk of injury, help manage chronic pain, and help improve your wellbeing, too.

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## Getting started with this booklet

The first section includes gentle exercises that were designed by NHS Choices. They are intended for older adults and are suitable for anyone who doesn't take regular exercise.

With easy-to-follow instructions, these exercises provide a gentle introduction to exercise you can do at home, without any special equipment required.

You can find more information on the exercises contained in this booklet, and additional exercises, at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Taking it further

When you're comfortable doing the gentle exercises, try moving on to the resistance band exercises.

**Don't forget to do the warm up and cool down exercises, too!**

## Before you begin

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 do these exercises at least twice a week. Build up slowly and aim to increase the repetitions of each exercise over time.



**Norfolk**  
County Council



# Sitting Exercises



## Chest Stretch



**This stretch is good for posture.**

- A** Sit upright and away from the back of the chair. Pull your shoulders back and down. Extend arms out to the side.
- B** Gently push your chest forwards and up until you feel a stretch across your chest.

**Hold for five to 10 seconds and repeat five times.**

## Upper Body Twist

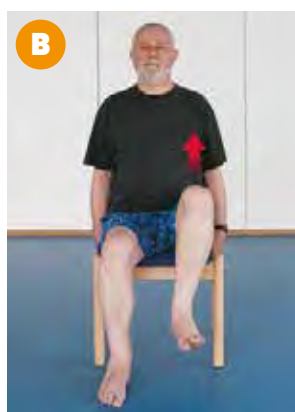


**This will develop and maintain flexibility in the upper back.**

- A** Sit upright with feet flat on the floor, cross your arms and reach for your shoulders.
- B** Without moving your hips, turn your upper body to the left as far as is comfortable.

**Hold for five seconds. Repeat going right. Do five of each.**

## Hip Marching



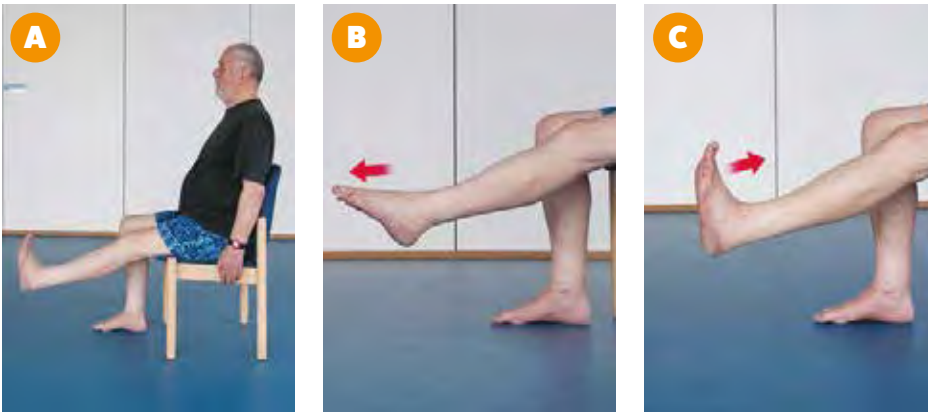
**This will strengthen hips and thighs and improve flexibility.**

- A** Sit upright and away from the back of the chair. Hold on to the sides of the chair.
- B** Lift your left leg, with your knee bent, as far as is comfortable. Place foot down with control.

**Repeat with the opposite leg. Do five lifts with each leg.**



## Ankle Stretch

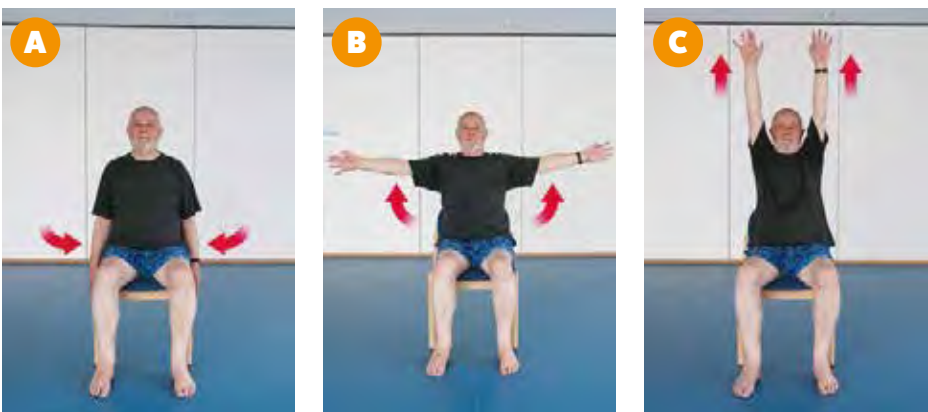


**This will improve ankle flexibility and reduce blood clot risk.**

- A** Sit upright, hold on to the side of the chair and straighten your left leg with your foot off the floor.
- B** With leg straight and raised, point your toes away from you.
- C** Point toes back towards you.

**Try two sets of five stretches with each foot.**

## Arm Raises



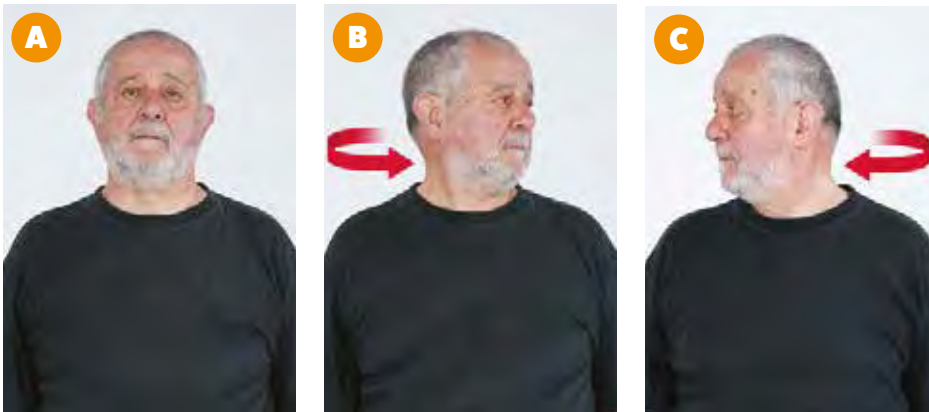
**This builds shoulder strength.**

- A** Sit upright, arms by your sides.
- B** With palms forwards, raise both arms out and to the side and up as far as is comfortable. Then return.
- C** Keep your shoulders down and arms straight throughout.

**Breathe out as you raise your arms and breathe in as you lower them. Repeat five times.**



## Neck Rotation

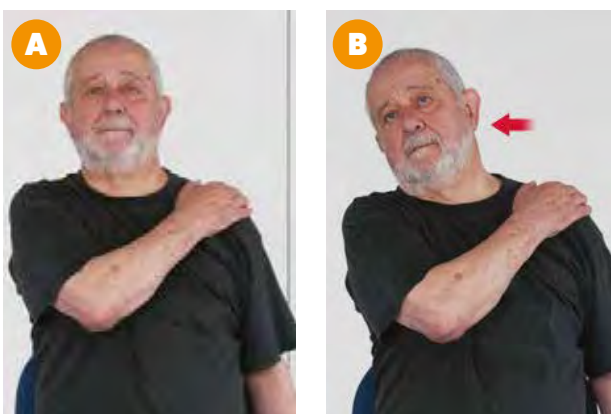


**This stretch is good for improving neck mobility and flexibility.**

- A** Sit upright with shoulders down. Look straight ahead.
- B** Slowly turn your head towards your left shoulder as far as is comfortable. Hold for five seconds and return to starting position.
- C** Repeat going right.

**Do three rotations on each side.**

## Neck Stretch



**This stretch is good for loosening tight neck muscles.**

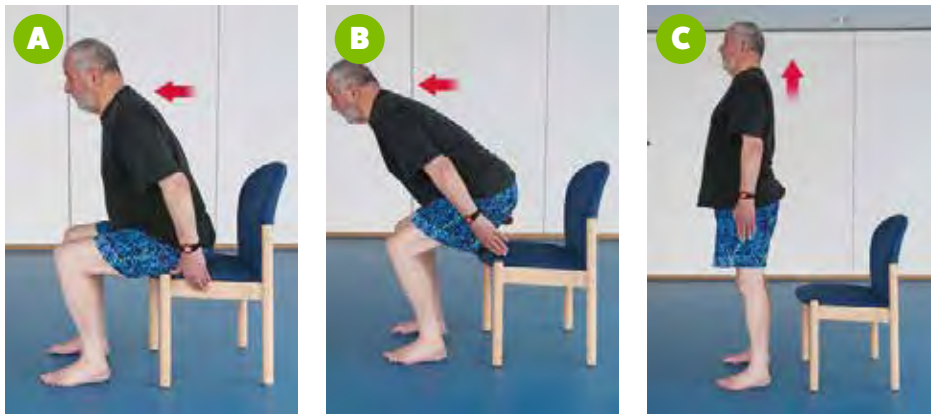
- A** Sitting upright, look straight ahead and hold your left shoulder down with your right hand.
- B** Slowly tilt your head to the right while holding your shoulder down. Repeat on the opposite side.

**Hold each stretch for five seconds and repeat three times on each side.**

# Strength Exercises



## Sit to Stand

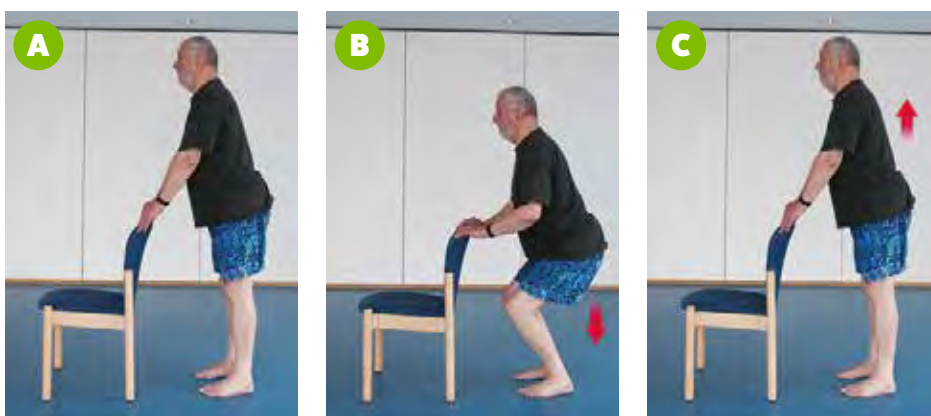


This is good for leg strength.

- A** Sit on the edge of the chair, feet hip-width apart. Lean slightly forwards.
- B** Stand up slowly, using your legs, not arms. Keep looking forwards, not down.
- C** Stand upright before slowly sitting down, bottom-first.

Aim for five repetitions - the slower the better.

## Mini Squats



- A** Rest your hands on the back of the chair for stability and stand with your feet hip-width apart.
- B** Slowly bend your knees as far as is comfortable, keeping them facing forwards. Aim to get them over your big toe. Keep your back straight at all times.
- C** Gently come up to standing, squeezing your buttocks as you do.

Repeat five times.



## Calf Raises



This stretch is good for posture.

- A** Rest your hands on the back of a chair for stability.
- B** Lift both heels off the floor as far as is comfortable. The movement should be slow and controlled.

Repeat five times. For more of a challenge, perform this exercise without support.

## Sideways Leg Lift



- A** Rest your hands on the back of a chair for stability.
- B** Raise your left leg to the side as far as is comfortable, keeping your back and hips straight. Avoid tilting to the right.
- C** Return to the starting position.
- D** Now raise your right leg to the side as far as possible.

Raise and lower each leg five times.

## Leg Extension

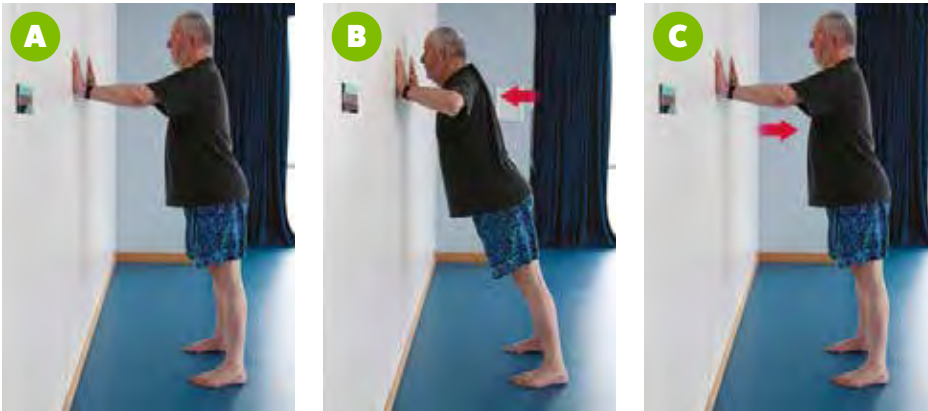


- A** Rest your hands on the back of a chair for stability.
- B** Standing upright, raise your left leg backwards, keeping it straight. Avoid arching your back as you take your leg back. You should feel the effort in the back of your thigh and bottom. Repeat with the other leg.

Hold the lift for up to five seconds and repeat five times with each leg.



## Wall Press Up

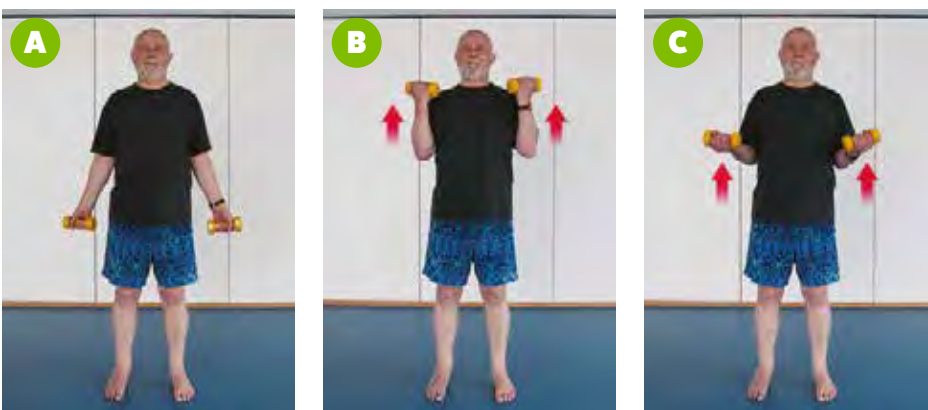


**This is good for leg strength.**

- A** Stand at arm's length from the wall. Place your hands flat against the wall, at chest level, with fingers pointing upwards.
- B** With back straight, slowly bend your arms, keeping elbows by your side. Aim to close the gap between you and the wall as much as you can.
- C** Slowly return to the start.

**Attempt three sets of 5–10 repetitions.**

## Bicep Curls



- A** Hold a pair of light weights (filled water bottles will do) and stand with your feet hip-width apart.
- B** Keeping your arms by your side, slowly bend them until the weight in your hand reaches your shoulder.
- C** Lower again slowly.

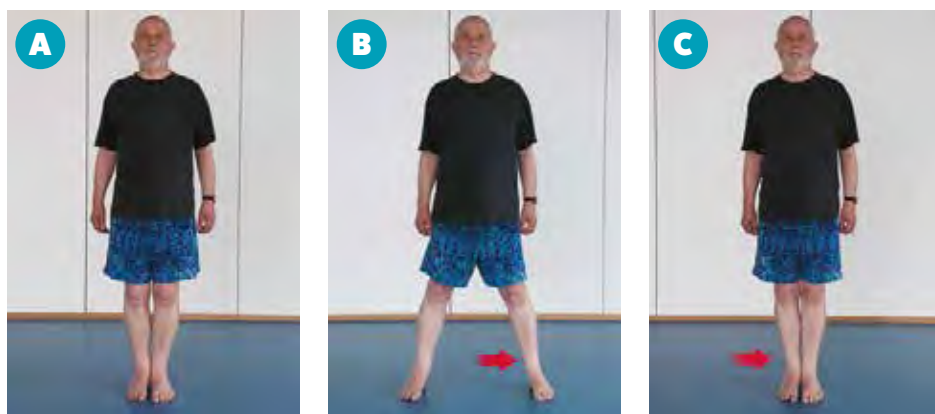
**This can also be carried out while sitting. Attempt three sets of five curls with each arm.**



# Balance Exercises



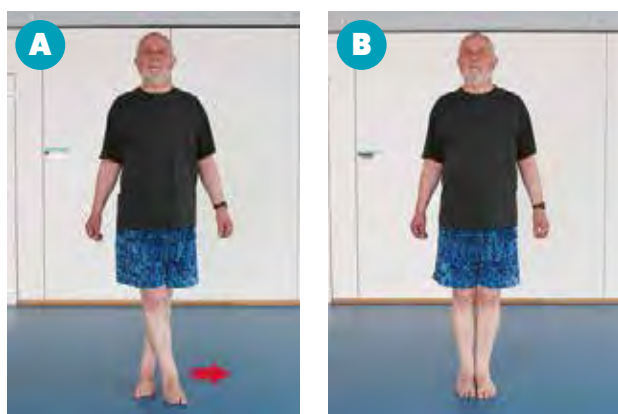
## Sideways Walking



- 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.**

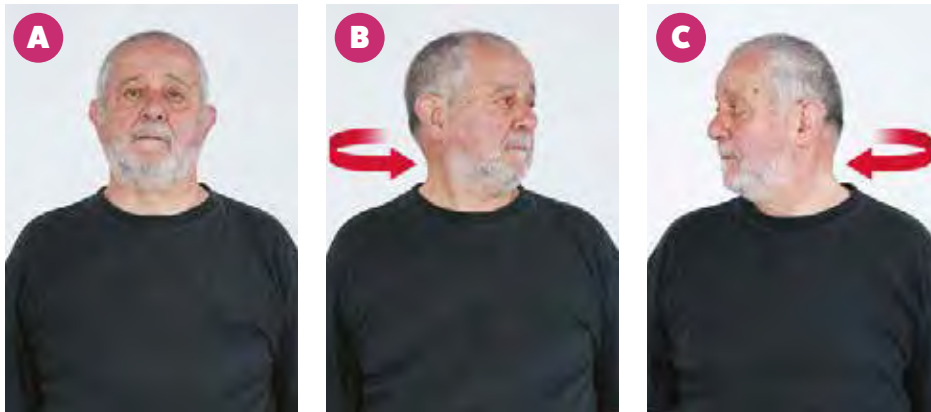
- A** Step up with your right leg.
- B** Bring your left leg up to join it.
- C** Step down again and return to the start position.

**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.**

# Flexibility Exercises



## Neck Rotation

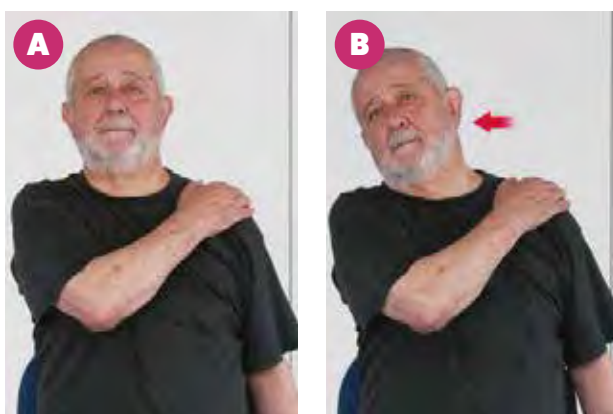


This stretch is good for improving neck mobility and flexibility.

- A** Sit upright with shoulders down. Look straight ahead.
- B** Slowly turn your head towards your left shoulder as far as is comfortable. Hold for five seconds and return to starting position.
- C** Repeat going right.

Do three rotations on each side.

## Neck Stretch



This stretch is good for loosening tight neck muscles.

- A** Sitting upright, look straight ahead and hold your left shoulder down with your right hand.
- B** Slowly tilt your head to the right while holding your shoulder down. Repeat on the opposite side.

Hold each stretch for five seconds and repeat three times on each side.



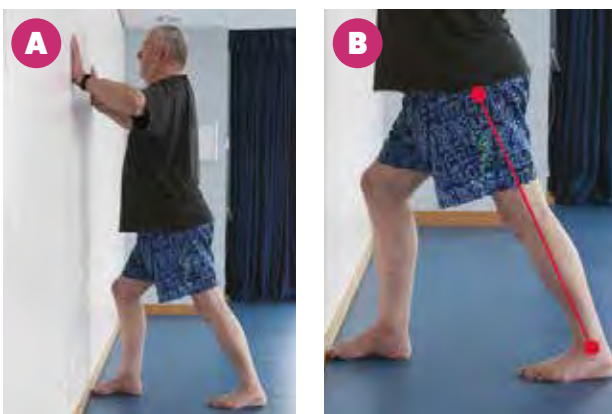
## Sideways Bend



- A** Stand upright with your feet hip-width apart and arms by your sides.
- B** Slide your left arm down your side as far as is comfortable.  
As you lower your arm, you should feel a stretch on the opposite hip.
- C** Repeat with your right arm down your right side.

Hold each stretch for two seconds and perform three on each side.

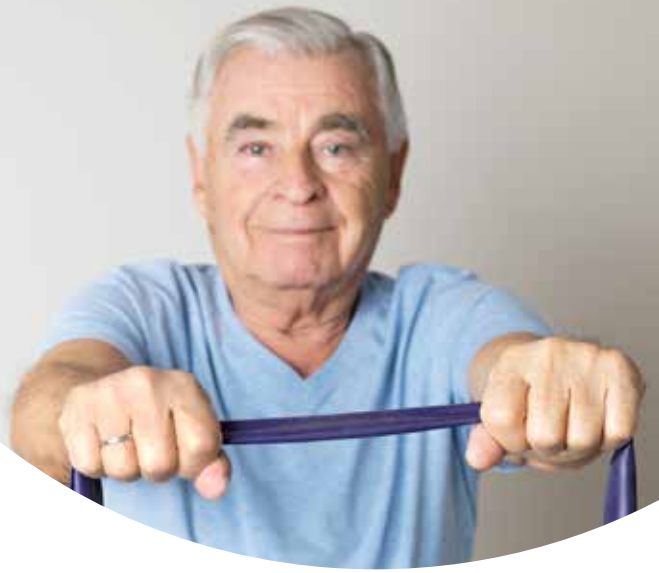
## Calf Stretch



- A** Place your hands against a wall for stability. Bend the right leg and step the left leg back at least a foot's distance, keeping it straight. Both feet should be flat on the floor.
- B** The left calf muscle is stretched by keeping the left leg as straight as possible and the left heel on the floor.

Repeat with the opposite leg and perform three on each side.

# Home Exercise using a Resistance Band



Once you're comfortable doing the gentle exercises in the first part of the book, try taking it further with a resistance band.

If you don't have a resistance band, you can still follow along with the exercises, using a bottle of water or a tin of beans to help build up your strength.



The following exercises were designed by Broadly Active, the exercise referral scheme that delivers exercise programmes prescribed by healthcare professionals to patients living with mental and physical health conditions.

## Warm Up

Always ensure that you do a warm up to prepare your body for an exercise session.

**Do each of these moves for 15-20 seconds:**

- March on the spot
- Take a step to the side and back, alternating sides
- Kick your heels out behind you, one at a time
- March on the spot with high knees
- Dig one heel at a time in front of you while curling your arms up to your shoulders
- March on the spot and do shoulder rolls
- Hold on to something for balance and swing one leg at a time back and forth
- Hold on to something for balance and perform ankle rolls

# Getting Started

Once you're warmed up, choose two of the following exercises in each area (arms, legs, or cardio) and complete the exercises for one minute, or perform 12-15 repetitions of each exercise.

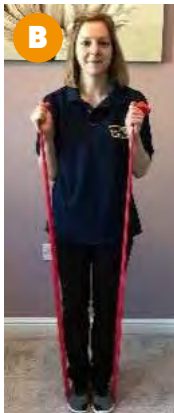
## Arm Exercises with Resistance Band

**Adaptation** for all resistance band exercises: perform movement without using the resistance band.

**Progression** for all resistance band exercises:

- Hold your hands closer together on the resistance band to create more resistance.
- If you have any hand weights or cans of beans etc at home, you could perform this exercise using these instead of the band.

### Bicep Curl



- A** Sitting on a chair or standing, place both your feet on the middle of the resistance band and hold each end of the band with your hands down by your sides.
- B** Keep your elbows into your sides, curl your hands/arms up into your chest, then return to your starting position.

### Triceps Kickback



- A** Standing, place both feet in the middle of the resistance band and hold on to each end of it with both hands.
- B** Raise one arm behind you straight at a time, only going as far as you feel comfortable.

**Slowly and controlled bring your arm back down by your side, repeat on the other side.**

## Chest Expansion



- A** Hold the resistance band roughly shoulder width apart.
- B** Slowly take your arms straight out to both sides of your body simultaneously.
- C** Slowly and in a controlled way bring your arms back into the centre of your body.

## Chest Press



- A** Wrap the band behind you, making sure it is around the middle of your back (in line with a bra strap or underneath your shoulder blades).
- B** Push your arms up and out away from your body in front, fully straightening your arms.

## Lateral Raise



- A** Standing, place both feet on the middle of the resistance band and hold each end of it with your hands.
- B** Raise both arms to the side, until they reach shoulder height, then return to your starting position.

# Arm Exercises with Resistance Band

## Front Raise



- A** Standing, place both feet on the middle of the resistance band.
- B** Holding each end of the resistance band, raise one arm at a time straight in front of you, so that your arm is parallel to the floor. Keep your palms facing down.

**DO NOT RAISE ABOVE SHOULDER LEVEL.**

## Double Press



- A** Hold the resistance band shoulder-width apart.
- B** Pull the resistance band in a diagonal motion with your arms fully straightened.
- C** Slowly and in a controlled way release the tension, bringing your hands back to the centre before performing the move again in the opposite direction.

## Lateral Shoulder Rotation

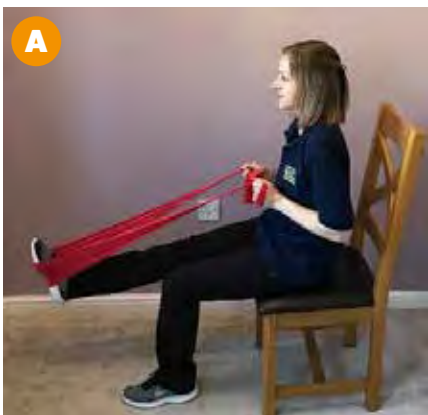


- A** Hold the resistance band in front of you with your elbows bent, palms facing upwards and your hands shoulder-width apart.
- B** Keeping your elbows pressed against your sides, take one hand out to the side of your body at a time, as far as you feel comfortable, and bring it back. Repeat on the other side.



# Leg Exercises with Resistance Band

## Single Leg Extension



Sit on a chair with your back straight.

- A** Place one foot in the middle of the resistance band, holding both ends of the band in your hands.
- B** Bend your knee towards you, then straighten it back out in front of you before returning to your starting position and repeating with the other leg.

## Outer Thigh Stretch



- A** Sitting on the chair, wrap the band around both legs, keeping your feet flat on the floor.
- B** Push both legs out against the band's resistance.

**Hold for a count of 2, relax and repeat.**

# Cardio exercises

These cardiovascular exercises don't use a resistance band, but should be attempted after you're comfortable doing the gentle exercises at the start of this booklet.

## Marching and Punching

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- Standing on the spot, march at a speed appropriate for your level.
- Punch arms forward.

### **Adaptation: Seated Marching**

- Sit forward on a chair, keep your back straight and sit tall.
- March at a speed appropriate for your level.
- Punch arms forward.

### **Progression**

- March and touch opposite hand to knee.
- March and touch opposite elbow to knee.

## Imaginary Skipping

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- Marching on the spot, move your arms as if you were skipping.

### **Progression**

- Gently jog and move your arms as if you were skipping.

## Side Steps

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- Step to the left side, lifting your left arm up to the side as you do so. Then do the same on the right side, and repeat alternating sides.

### **Progression**

- Side steps, with both arms lifting with each step.
- Star jumps.

# Cool down

It's important to perform a cool down after your workout to allow your heart rate to decrease gradually and your body temperature to return to normal.

Stretching when you're cooling down is important because your limbs, muscles, and joints are still warm.

Stretching can help reduce the build-up of lactic acid, which can lead to muscles cramping and stiffness.

If you experience muscle stiffness in the following day or two, repeat these cool down stretches and make sure you drink plenty of water to rehydrate.



## Stretches: hold for 15-30 seconds

### Marching on the spot perform:

**Shoulder Rolls** - roll your shoulders forwards and then back.

**Chest Opener** - lift your arms up in front, palms touching, and open your arms out to the side.

**Back Stretch** - push your hands out in front of you, and look down slightly between your arms.

**Chest Stretch** - take arms behind your back, squeeze shoulder blades together and look up slightly.

**Shoulder Stretch** - take one arm across your body, pull gently to feel a stretch from your shoulder.

**Triceps Stretch** - take one arm behind your head, push back gently to feel in the back on bent arm

**Inside Leg Stretch** - take your left leg out to the side, making sure both feet are facing forwards, bend your left knee and sit back into the stretch. You should feel a stretch going up the inside of your right leg. Repeat on other side.

**Ankle rolls** - holding onto something for balance if needed, lift your left foot slightly off the ground and draw circles with your ankle in both directions. Repeat with your right foot.



Arms, legs, and cardio  
exercises from Broadly Active.



Sitting, Strength, Balance and  
Flexibility exercises from NHS Choices  
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