

# Small steps to feeling good





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**Exercise  
makes you  
feel happy  
and healthy,  
it's free and  
can be fun!**

# Why exercise at home?

**Being home for a long time means we've not been getting the exercise we used to. Even before the COVID-19 virus hit the UK, not enough of us were getting the exercise we needed, so it is vital that we get fit enough to enjoy being out and about as safely and healthily as possible.**

Exercise (even a bit) can help prevent or cut down the risk of:

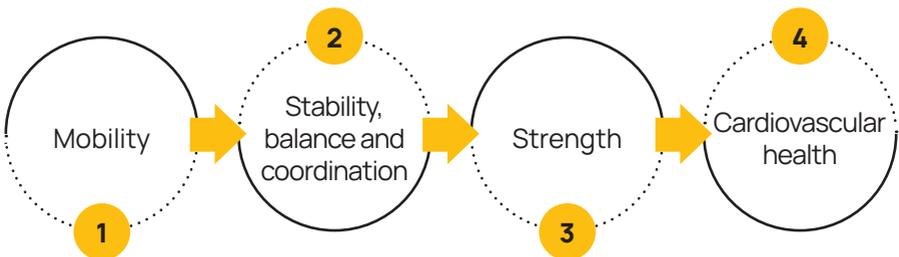
- Medical problems like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer and heart attacks
- Joint and muscle problems
- Suffering mental health problems
- Hospital admissions for an emergency and spending a long time in hospital if you do need to be admitted
- Loss of independence, difficulty mobilising and obesity

Much more importantly, exercise makes you feel happy and healthy, it's free and can be fun!

This leaflet shows you some simple exercises anybody can do at home:

- The exercise levels chosen would suit adults of any age, whether you currently exercise or not and all these exercises take very little time to perform
- There are also some tips for moving onto the next set of exercises when you are finding the starter ones too easy
- Don't give up after mastering the exercises here – keep going and try and move on to more exercises

Visit [howfittoday.co.uk/exercises](https://www.howfittoday.co.uk/exercises) to see videos for each exercise.



The exercises are divided into these four main areas but to gain the most benefit, try to complete all four if you can.

# Getting started

**There are three different levels of exercises, so choose a level that suits your own level of fitness best. The next level up is a bit more challenging than the one before and you should try to move up a level when you can comfortably manage the previous exercises.**

You can also switch between levels if there are exercises in the next level that you think you can do safely. Wear sensible footwear, keep some water to hand and keep a sturdy chair next to you for stability if you are not used to exercising.

You should aim to have a programme that you can manage and repeat 4 or 5 days a week,

or as many of the 5 days that you can. If there are too many exercises for you to do, just cut back.

To get the most benefit, you should feel that you have done something a little out of the ordinary – a little warmer, a little short of breath, feeling your heart rate going a little faster, within the safety limits listed below.



- Do try the exercises
- Do keep doing them as we have shown you; improvements happen for everybody over time
- Do follow the links to the online resources
- Do involve your family and friends to help keep you motivated, whether outdoors, by video call or in person if social distancing allows



- Don't feel that you are too unfit to try these; they are designed to help people start slow and work up gently
- Don't do an exercise if you are unsure how to do it

**STOP** an exercise **STRAIGHT AWAY** if you have chest pain, shortness of breath worse than usual, or you feel so unsteady that you might fall.

**Some exercise  
is better than  
none, do as  
much as you  
can to feel the  
improvements.**

# Mobility Level 1



## Seated ankle circles

1. Sit upright with your feet flat
2. Lift one foot off the ground
3. 'Draw' a circle with your big toe 10 times clockwise and 10 times anti-clockwise
4. Repeat with the other foot



## Seated toe-heel rocks

1. Sit upright with your feet flat and toes pointing forwards
2. Lift your heels, then lower to a flat foot position
3. Lift your toes, then lower to a flat foot position
4. Use momentum to rock between the two 10-15 times



## Seated marching (out and in)

1. Sit upright with your feet flat
2. March your legs alternatively for 30 seconds
3. Step your left leg to the side, then return to the middle 10 times
4. Repeat with your right leg

\* Try to stay within a marching motion and rhythm



## Seated shoulder rolls

1. Sit upright and gently clench your fists
2. Inhale and roll your shoulders forwards and up towards your ears
3. Exhale and roll your shoulders back and down in a circular movement
4. Repeat 10 times

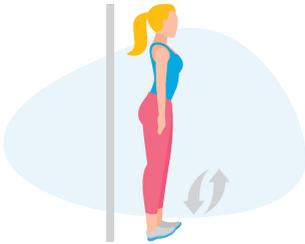
# Mobility Level 2



## Standing ankle mobility

1. Stand as shown with one foot touching the wall
2. Bend both of your knees and try to touch the wall with your front knee without your heels lifting up
3. Repeat 10 times each side

\* To progress: step your foot back a few centimetres



## Standing toe-heel raises

1. Stand with your feet hip width apart, using a sturdy chair, kitchen bench or wall for support
2. Lift your toes up for 2-3 seconds, then lower to a flat foot position
3. Lift your heels up for 2-3 seconds then lower to a flat foot position
4. Repeat 10-15 times



## Standing hip rotations

1. Stand upright using a chair or wall for support
2. Raise one foot off the ground to where you can stay balanced
3. Slowly move the knee out to the side as far as is comfortable
4. Hold for a second and return to the start
5. Repeat 5 times on each side



## Seated reach backs

1. Sit upright and reach your hands behind your body
2. Top hand palm facing forward, bottom hand palm facing away
3. Keeping your elbows out, bring your hands as close together as you can
4. Alternatively, do this with your hands to the front
5. Switch the hand positions over and repeat 5 times

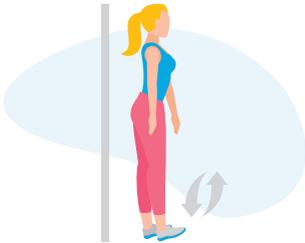
## Mobility Level 3



### Half kneeling ankle/knee mobility

1. In a kneeling position as shown, gently guide your knee forwards and back
2. Repeat 10 times on each side

\* Only move where it feels comfortable



### Toe and heel walks

1. Stand near a wall or kitchen bench for stability if needed
2. Lift your heels and walk 10 steps forward on your toes
3. Lift your toes and walk 10 steps forward on your heels



### Floor easy sit

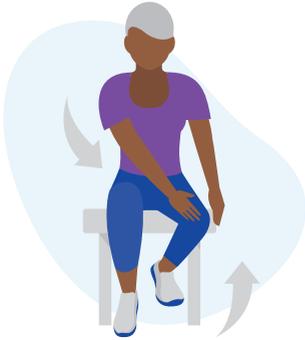
1. Sit on a soft surface with one leg crossed over the other and with one hand on the floor, place the other arm on the inside of the front knee
2. Sit as tall as you can by pulling your shoulders down and lifting your chest up, then gently push your arms out against leg as you take a few deep breaths
3. Switch the leg and arm positions and repeat 5 times



### Wall shoulder reaches

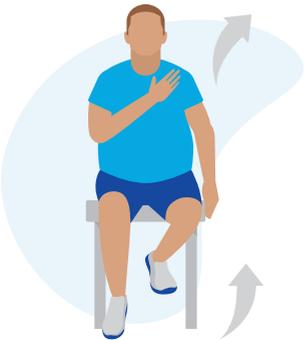
1. Stand tall or with knees slightly bent, 1-2 steps back from a wall
2. Place your hands on the wall at chest height
3. Slowly walk your palms up the wall as far as you can comfortably and then back down to the start
4. Repeat 5 times

# Stability, balance and coordination Level 1



## Seated march with knee tap

1. Sit upright and begin to march
2. When lifting your left knee, reach your right hand to tap your left knee
3. When lifting your right knee, reach your left hand to touch your right knee
4. Keep alternating and complete 10 times on each side



## Seated marching with shoulder tap

1. Sit upright and begin to march
2. When lifting your left knee, reach your right hand to tap your left shoulder
3. When lifting your right knee, reach your left hand to touch your right shoulder
4. Keep alternating and complete 10 times on each side



## Seated side rock

1. Sit upright and hold firmly onto the sides of your chair
2. Gently lean to the left until all your weight is on your left hip - keep your left foot planted firmly into the floor and raise onto your right toes/lift right foot off the floor as able
3. Hold for 5-10 seconds and return to start
4. Repeat 5 times on each side

# Stability, balance and coordination Level 2



## Single leg balance

1. Stand upright using a sturdy chair, kitchen bench or wall for support
2. Raise one knee upwards to waist height if possible and hold for 5-10 seconds, then lower your leg slowly
3. Repeat with your other leg
4. Complete 5-10 times on each leg

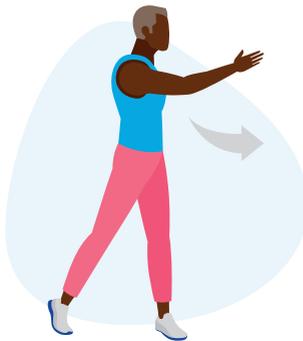
\* Tighten your stomach, leg and bottom muscles when standing on one leg



## Arms crossed stand eyes closed

1. Stand with your feet hip width apart, using a sturdy chair, kitchen bench or wall for support and tighten your stomach, leg and bottom muscles throughout exercise
2. Stand with your arms crossed and hands on opposite shoulders
3. Close your eyes and hold position for 10 seconds
4. Repeat 5 times

\* Open your eyes immediately and hold onto support for balance if you begin to feel unsteady



## Standing turns

1. Stand with your feet slightly wider than hip width apart, with both shoulders and your back against a wall
2. Turn to your left whilst pivoting on your right foot and reach for the wall with your right hand, keeping your left shoulder in contact with the wall
3. Slowly return to the start position and repeat on the other side
4. Repeat 5 times on each side

# Stability, balance and coordination Level 3



## Single leg balance with reach

1. Stand upright using a sturdy chair, kitchen bench or wall for support - aim to not hold onto the support if possible
2. Lift one foot up in front of you, slightly off the ground
3. Reach the foot of lifted leg forward, just above the floor, pause and return to the start position
4. Complete 5-10 times on each leg

\* Tighten your stomach, leg and bottom muscles when standing on one leg



## Single leg balance 3-way reach

1. Stand upright and to the side of a sturdy chair, kitchen bench or wall for support
2. Stand on your left leg with a slightly bent knee and lift your right foot slightly above the ground then: reach your foot forward, then back; out to the side, then back; and finally, backwards and slightly behind your left foot, then back
3. Complete 3-5 times on each leg

\* Try to keep your foot off the floor throughout exercise when standing on one leg



## Balance with arm reach

1. Stand with one arm against or near a wall for safety
2. Lift your knee up on the same side as the wall
3. Now place the opposite hand on your hip of the raised leg
4. Slightly bend your knee on the standing leg and tighten your stomach, leg and bottom muscles
5. Now sweep your hand from your hip, up and across the body until it's above your opposite shoulder
6. Repeat 5 times on one side then the other

# Strength Level 1



## Seated back extension

1. Sit with your arms crossed and hands on opposite shoulders
2. Keep your head and chest up and slowly lean forwards so your body is at a 45 degree angle whilst always looking forward
3. Push through your feet and squeeze your bottom muscles to sit back up straight
4. Repeat 10-15 times

\* Keep your back straight throughout the exercise



## Seated leg lift

1. Sit upright, away from the back of your seat throughout
2. Lift one leg straight out in front of you, do not lock your knee and be gentle with the knee joint
3. Squeeze your thigh muscles for 2-3 seconds then slowly lower your leg down
4. Complete 5-10 times on each leg

\* Do not hold your breath throughout the exercise



## Seated rotations

1. Sit with your arms crossed and hands on opposite shoulders
2. Gently turn your body one direction as far as it feels comfortable, breathing out as you do
3. Move back to the start position and turn the opposite way
4. Repeat 10-15 times

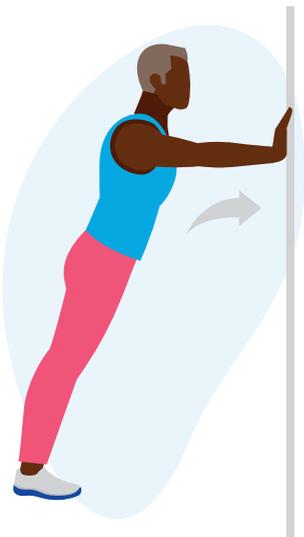
\* To prevent dizziness, let your body lead the way, not your head

# Strength Level 1



## Sit to stand using hands

1. Sit upright with your feet slightly behind your knees
2. Hold firmly onto the sides or arms of your chair
3. Shuffle your bum forward towards the end of the chair
4. Lean your chest forwards with your head up and looking forwards
5. Push through your feet and hands to help you stand up, squeezing your leg and bottom muscles to help you
6. To sit back down, make sure you feel the chair with the backs of your legs and keep your head up, then reach your hands back for the arm rests and gently sit down
7. Repeat 10-15 times



## Wall push

1. Stand upright with your feet hip width apart, facing a wall
2. Take 1-2 steps back from the wall
3. Place your hands on the wall at chest height, keeping your arms straight
4. Lower your body towards the wall by bending at the elbows - go as close to the wall as you can manage
5. Tighten your stomach, leg and bottom muscles and push through your hands away from the wall to return to the starting position
6. Repeat 5-10 times

\* Breathe in when lowering yourself, breathe out when pushing away from the wall; try not to hold your breath

## Strength Level 2



### Supported half squats

1. Stand with your feet slightly wider than hip width apart, using a sturdy chair or wall for support
2. Bend your knees and sit back from your hips as if you were going to sit down but only go halfway whilst keeping your head and chest up
3. Push through your feet and squeeze your leg and bottom muscles to stand up straight
4. Repeat 10-15 times

\* Breathe in when squatting and breathe out when standing back up; try not to hold your breath



### Seated leg lift with hold

1. Sit upright, away from the back of your seat throughout
2. Lift one leg straight out in front of you, do not lock your knee and be gentle with the knee joint
3. Squeeze your thigh muscles for 5-10 seconds then slowly lower your leg down
4. Complete 5-10 times on each leg

\* Do not hold your breath throughout the exercise



### Leg marching

1. Sit upright, keeping your back off the back rest throughout
2. Raise one knee slowly up as far as it feels comfortable
3. As you place your foot back down, lift your opposite knee up in a slow marching fashion
4. Count to 3 going up and down
5. Repeat 10-15 times on each side

## Strength Level 2



### Seated reach up and pull down

1. Sit upright keeping your back off the back rest throughout
2. Reach your arms up overhead, slightly wider than shoulder width apart
3. Imagine grabbing a bar and pulling it down whilst squeezing your arm and shoulder muscles
4. When you have pulled down, hold here and squeeze your back muscles for 3 seconds
5. Repeat 10-15 times

\* To make this exercise more challenging, apply some resistance



### Kneeling push up

1. Get onto your hands and knees
2. Place your hands on the floor, slightly ahead of your shoulders and cross your feet
3. Gently lean forwards and tighten your stomach muscles
4. Lower yourself towards the floor by bending your elbows, getting as close to the floor as you can
5. Tighten your stomach muscles and push through your hands away from the floor to return to the starting position
6. Repeat 5-10 times

\* Breathe in when lowering yourself, breathe out when pushing away from the floor; try not to hold your breath

## Strength Level 3



### Scapula push ups

1. Stand upright with your feet hip width apart, facing a wall
2. Place your hands on the wall at chest height
3. Without bending your elbows, lower yourself between your arms then push into the wall to come back to the start position
4. Repeat 10-15 times

\* To make this exercise more challenging, try the same exercise on your hands and knees instead of against a wall



### Bodyweight hip hinge

1. Stand upright with your feet hip width apart, keep your head and chest up whilst looking forwards
2. Push your hips back and bend in the middle, slightly bending your knees until you feel a stretch in the back of your thighs
3. To stand back up straight, push through your feet whilst squeezing your leg and bottom muscles
4. Repeat 10-15 times



### Seated cycling

1. Sit halfway to the front of the chair
2. Hold firmly onto the sides or arms of the chair
3. Rest your back on the back rest
4. Lift both of your feet up and bring one knee slowly towards your chest
5. As you lower this leg back down, bring your opposite knee slowly towards your chest
6. Continue to alternate leg in a pedalling-like action, keeping your feet off of the ground
7. Repeat 10-15 times on each side

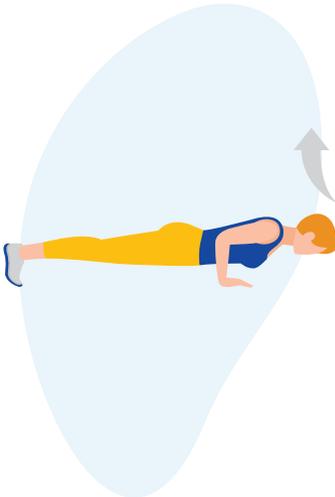
## Strength Level 3



### Bodyweight squats

1. Stand with your feet slightly wider than hip width apart
2. Bend your knees and sit back from your hips as if you were going to sit down whilst keeping your head and chest up - reach your arms out in front of you to help you balance
3. Push through your feet and squeeze your leg and bottom muscles to stand up straight
4. Repeat 10-15 times

\* Breathe in when squatting, breathe out when standing back up; try not to hold your breath at any point



### Full push up

1. Get onto your hands and knees and place your hands on the floor, slightly ahead of your shoulders with fingers spread
2. Kick your legs out to be on your hands and toes in a plank position, keeping your stomach, leg and bottom muscles tight to protect your back throughout
3. Lower yourself towards the floor by bending your elbows, getting as close to the floor as you can without dipping your head towards the floor - to make this more challenging, pause for 1-3 seconds when lowering yourself towards the floor before pushing back up
4. Tighten your stomach muscles and push through your hands away from the floor to return to the starting position and repeat 5-10 times

\* Breathe in when lowering yourself, breathe out when pushing away from the floor and try not to hold your breath

**No matter which level you are at, this will provide you with an easy way to improve your fitness.**

If in doubt, please start with the level 1 cardio exercises and if it feels challenging, use it regularly until it feels comfortable. Only then consider moving to level 2. This will take some time, or you may just want to keep using level 1 to improve your fitness.

The same applies if you are able to start at level 2, however you must already be fairly active for this. Maintain level 2 until it feels comfortable before deciding whether to proceed to level 3 which is the most challenging.

# Cardio



## Seated marching Level 1

1. 30 seconds effort
2. Rest 60 seconds
3. 3-5 rounds



## Squat to seat Level 2

1. 60 seconds effort
2. Rest 60 seconds
3. 3-5 rounds



## Jog in place Level 3

1. 60 seconds effort
2. Rest 60 seconds
3. 3-5 rounds



## Step ups on low step Level 3

1. 60 seconds effort
2. Rest 60 seconds
3. 3-5 rounds

**Record your total repetitions and try to add one or two each session.**

# Your health

## Healthy eating

- Avoid ready meals if you can
- Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables; tinned and frozen are fine
- If possible, eat lean meat, poultry, fish (especially oily fish) and eggs and avoid pies, pastries and processed meats
- Drink plenty of water and limit sugar in caffeinated drinks
- Avoid too many sweets, chocolates, crisps, cakes, biscuits and too much bread.
- For more tips on healthy eating, visit [nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/eight-tips-for-healthy-eating](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/eight-tips-for-healthy-eating)

## Smoking

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health, as well as having financial and physical benefits. Quitting will also improve your chances of coping well with the COVID-19 virus. So this is a great time to try and stop smoking while you are trying to increase your fitness with the HowFit plan.

If you need additional help, there are plenty of resources available to improve your chances of quitting for good. Further information can be found by visiting [nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking)

## Alcohol consumption

It's tempting to reach for that extra can of beer, glass of wine or gin and tonic while at home, but not only is this just empty calories, it contributes to obesity and carries a lot of health risks. Try and keep to the safe limits of 14 units\* for men and women, per week.

If you are struggling with too much alcohol, there is plenty of help out there to improve your chances of cutting down safely. Visit [nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support)

\* This amounts to around 10 small glasses of low-strength wine or 6 pints of average strength beer or lager.

## Other resources

For tips on ways to get active in the home and outside, visit [sportengland.org/jointhemovement](https://sportengland.org/jointhemovement)

For falls prevention advice including strength and balance exercises, visit [nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls](https://nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls)

For exercises for healthy joints, visit [versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/exercising-with-arthritis/exercises-for-healthy-joints](https://versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/exercising-with-arthritis/exercises-for-healthy-joints)

For general health and wellbeing advice and resources, visit [nhs.uk/live-well](https://nhs.uk/live-well)

For specific advice on exercise, visit [nhs.uk/live-well/exercise](https://nhs.uk/live-well/exercise)

For better health, little changes can support health improvements, visit [nhs.uk/better-health](https://nhs.uk/better-health)

For making better small, practical changes that fit in with your life, visit [nhs.uk/oneyou](https://nhs.uk/oneyou)

For looking after your mental health and wellbeing, visit [nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](https://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters)

For creating a free mind plan to help you deal with stress and anxiety, improve your sleep, boost your mood and feel more in control, visit [nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/your-mind-plan-quiz](https://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/your-mind-plan-quiz)

For secure access to a range of NHS services on your smartphone or tablet, download the NHS App. The NHS App is available now on iOS and Android [nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/nhs-app](https://nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/nhs-app)

**Further details available on our website [howfittoday.co.uk/exercises](https://howfittoday.co.uk/exercises)**

If you are unwell, mentally, or physically, in a way that would have made you call a doctor or try and get medical advice before the pandemic, you still need to do this.

For non-urgent problems talk to your local pharmacist or call your GP surgery – they

are very much open for business as usual, although some of the ways they work may have changed due to the pandemic.

If you have a medical emergency, call 999. If the problem is less urgent, go online to the NHS 111 system at [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) or call 111.

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[howfittoday.co.uk](https://www.howfittoday.co.uk)

If you have a query regarding HowFit, please contact us on  
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