

CDC – Growing Stronger Program Exercise Guide

These are some basic exercises that will help you strengthen your upper body, lower body, abdomen and back. Practice these exercises at least three times a week. It may help you with balance, coordination, and mobility. It may also help with problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, arthritis, and back pain.

Start with Stage 1 exercises. Once you are ready, go ahead and add in exercises from Stage 2, and then Stage 3. Don't forget to warm up beforehand, and cool down afterwards. Keep a log of all the exercises you do so that you can track your progress.

Warmup

Take a 5 or 10-minute walk, either around town or around your house. Walking helps get the blood flowing to your muscles, preparing your body for exercise. It also reduces the risk of injury and helps your muscles loosen up, increasing the benefit from exercise.

Stage 1

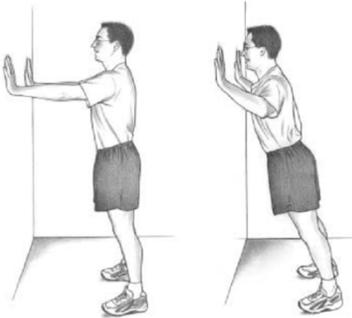
Do each exercise 10 times, then rest a minute and do another set of 10.

1. **Squats**: A great exercise for strengthening hips, thighs, and buttocks.



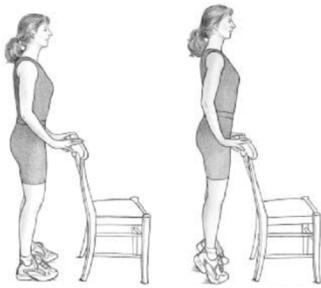
- Stand in front of a chair and hold your arms out straight
- Lower yourself slowly, to a count of four, until you are almost sitting.
- Pause, then slowly stand up again.
- Make sure to keep your knees behind your toes the whole time.

2. **Wall Pushups**: Will help to strengthen your arms, shoulders, and chest.



- Stand a little more than one arm's length from a wall. Lean your body forward and place your palms flat against the wall.
- Slowly bend your elbows and lower your upper body toward the wall
- Pause. Then, slowly push yourself back until your arms are straight—but don't lock your elbows.
- Repeat 10 times for one set. Rest for a minute. Then complete a second set of 10.

3. **Toe Stands:** Good for your calves and ankles, and will help with stability and balance.



- Use a chair or counter for balance. Slowly push up as far as you can, onto the balls of your feet and hold for two to four seconds.
- Then, slowly lower your heels back to the floor.
- Make sure you don't lean on the counter or chair—use them for balance only.

- To make it more challenging, try it on a stair like this:



4. **Finger Marching:** This will help improve strength and flexibility in your upper body.

Stand, or sit forward in an armless chair, with feet on the floor.

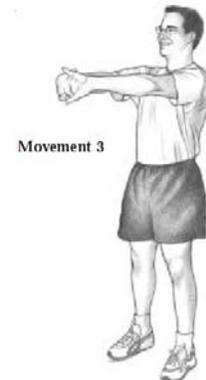
Movement 1: Imagine there is a wall directly in front of you. Slowly walk your fingers up the wall until your arms are above your head. Hold them overhead while wiggling your fingers for about 10 seconds and then slowly walk them back down.



Movement 2: Touch your two hands behind your back. Reach for the opposite elbow with each hand. Hold the position for about 10 seconds, stretching your back, arms, and chest.



Movement 3: Hold your hands together in front of your body. Raise your arms so that they're parallel to the ground, with your palms facing the imaginary wall. Curl your shoulders forward. You should feel the stretch in your wrist and upper back. Hold the position for about 10 seconds.



Repeat this three-part exercise three times.

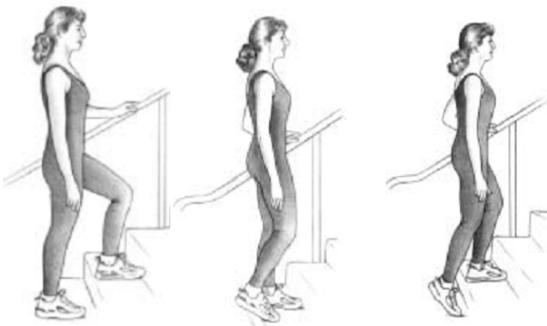
Stage 2 (Note: If you don't have dumbbells, fill a water bottle with sand, or use any object that feels a little bit heavy.)

Again, do each exercise 10 times, wait a minute, then do another set of 10.

1. **Biceps Curl:** This exercise will help you lift heavy objects.
 - With a weight in each hand, slowly lift up the weights, while keeping your upper arms and elbows close to your side—as if you had a newspaper tucked beneath your arm.
 - Pause. Then, to a count of four, slowly lower the dumbbells back toward your thighs.



2. **Step Ups:** Will improve your balance and build strength in your legs, hips, and buttocks.



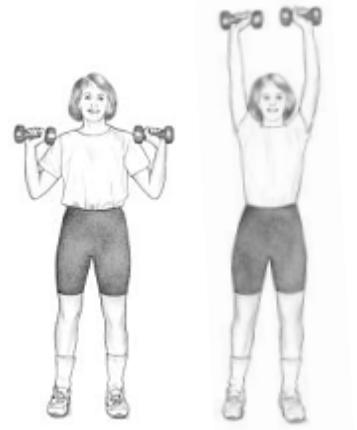
- Stand at the bottom of a staircase. Put your right foot on the first step.
- Slowly straighten your right leg to lift up your left leg slowly until it reaches the first step. Keep your right knee straight. Let your left foot tap the first step near your right foot.
- Pause. Then, slowly lower your left foot back to the floor. Repeat 10 times with the right leg

and 10 times with the left leg for one set. Make sure you don't let your back leg do the work.

To make it tougher, do two steps at a time:



3. Overhead Press: Strengthens your arms, upper back, and shoulders.
- Start with your hands level with your shoulders.
 - Slowly push the dumbbells up over your head until your arms are fully extended—but don't lock your elbows.
 - Pause. Then slowly lower the dumbbells back to shoulder level, bringing your elbows down close to your sides.



4. Hip Abduction: Targets your hips, thighs, and buttocks, and strengthens your hipbones.
- Stand behind a sturdy chair. Slowly lift your right leg out to the side.
 - Pause. Then slowly lower your right foot back to the ground. Repeat 10 times with the right leg and 10 times with the left leg for one set.
 - To make this exercise more challenging, you may add ankle weights



Stage 3 (Note: Here's how to make your own ankle weights. Take a long tube sock, tie a knot ¼ of the way from the end, pour in 1-2 pounds of dry beans or rice, then tie another knot, wrap it around your ankle and tie the two ends together. Or fill a plastic Ziploc bag with 1-2 pounds of sand and wrap it around your ankle with an ACE bandage.)

Do each exercise 10 times, then rest a minute and do another set of 10.

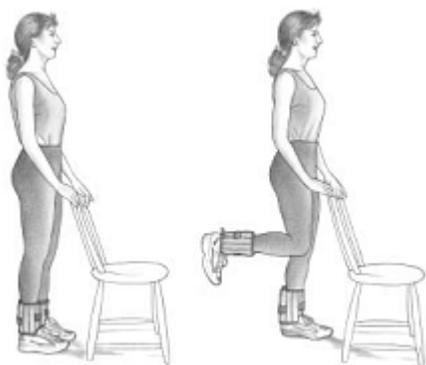
1. **Knee Extension:** Targets the muscles in the front of the thigh – strengthens weak knees and helps with knee arthritis. Do this with Exercise 2, the "knee curl," which works on muscles in the back of your thighs.

- Put on your ankle weights. Sit all the way back, so that your feet barely touch the ground. If your chair is too low, add a rolled-up towel under your knees.
- Slowly lift your right leg, extending your leg until your knee is straight.
- Pause. Then slowly lower your foot back to the ground. Repeat 10 times with the right leg and 10 times with the left leg for one set.



2. **Knee Curl:** Strengthens the muscles of the back of the upper leg, known as the hamstrings. Helps with walking and climbing.

- Put on your ankle weights. Slowly bend your right leg, bringing your heel up toward your buttocks.
- Pause. Then slowly lower your foot back to the ground. Repeat 10 times with your right leg and 10 times with your left leg for one set.



3. Pelvic Tilt: Improves posture and tightens the muscles in your abdomen and buttocks. Do this exercise with the floor back extension (#4) to strengthen your midsection. (You should not have the ankle weights on during this exercise.)

- Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and arms at your sides.
- Slowly lift your pelvis so that your hips and lower back are off the floor, while your upper back and shoulders remain in place.
- Pause. Then slowly lower your pelvis all the way down. Repeat 10 times for one set.



4. Floor Back Extension: Strengthens abdominal muscles and helps with lower back pain.

- Lie on the floor facedown, with two pillows under your hips.
- Extend your arms straight overhead on the floor. Slowly lift your right arm and left leg off the floor.
- Pause. Then slowly lower your arm and leg back to the floor. Repeat 10 times for one set, and then switch to left arm with right leg for another 10 repetitions.



Cooldown

1. Quadriceps Stretch: Will help relax the muscles of the front of your thigh and make them more flexible.
 - With your left hand, hold a chair or counter for balance. Bend your right leg back and grasp your right ankle in your right hand. You should feel a stretch in the front of the thigh. Hold the stretch for a slow count of 30. Release your right ankle and repeat with the other leg.



2. Hamstring/Calf Stretch: This stretch will give hamstring and calf muscles more flexibility and make it easier for you to bend over.
 - Stand, facing a sturdy chair.
 - Slowly bend forward at the hip, keeping your legs straight. Rest your hands on the seat of the chair, feeling a stretch in the back of your upper and lower leg.
 - Hold for 20-30 seconds. Release the stretch and repeat.



3. Chest and Arm Stretch: This simple reaching stretch will improve the flexibility in your arms and chest and in the front of your shoulders.

- Stand with your arms at your sides.
- Extend both arms behind your back and clasp your hands together, if possible, retracting your shoulders.
- Hold the stretch for a slow count of 20 to 30. Release the stretch and repeat. Make sure you breathe throughout the stretch.



4. Neck, Upper Back, and Shoulder Stretch: This easy stretch targets the neck, back, and shoulders. Do it often, during any activity that makes you feel stiff, such as sitting at a desk or at a computer.

- Stand with your hands clasped in front of you.
- Rotate your hands, then raise your arms to about chest height. Gently press your palms away from your body.
- You should feel a stretch in your neck and upper back and along your shoulders. Hold the stretch for a slow count of 20 to 30. Release the stretch and repeat. Make sure you breathe throughout the stretch.



