

Exercises to do While Sitting

Exercises that you do while sitting (*chair exercises*) can give you many of the same benefits as full exercise. Benefits include strengthening your heart, burning calories, and keeping muscles and joints healthy. Exercise can also improve your mood and help with depression and anxiety.

You may benefit from chair exercises if you are unable to do standing exercises due to:

- Diabetic foot pain.
- Obesity.
- Illness.
- Arthritis.
- Recovery from surgery or injury.
- Breathing problems.
- Balance problems.
- Another type of disability.

Before starting chair exercises, check with your health care provider or a physical therapist to find out how much exercise you can tolerate and which exercises are safe for you. If your health care provider approves:

- Start out slowly and build up over time. Aim to work up to about 10–20 minutes for each exercise session.
- Make exercise part of your daily routine.
- Drink water when you exercise. **Do not** wait until you are thirsty. Drink every 10–15 minutes.
- Stop exercising right away if you have pain, nausea, shortness of breath, or dizziness.
- If you are exercising in a wheelchair, make sure to lock the wheels.
- Ask your health care provider whether you can do tai chi or yoga. Many positions in these mind-body exercises can be modified to do while seated.

Warm-up

Before starting other exercises:

1. Sit up as straight as you can. Have your knees bent at 90 degrees, which is the shape of the capital letter "L." Keep your feet flat on the floor.
2. Sit at the front edge of your chair, if you can.
3. Pull in (*tighten*) the muscles in your abdomen and stretch your spine and neck as straight as you can. Hold this position for a few minutes.
4. Breathe in and out evenly. Try to concentrate on your breathing, and relax your mind.

Stretching

Exercise A: Arm stretch



1. Hold your arms out straight in front of your body.
2. Bend your hands at the wrist with your fingers pointing up, as if signaling someone to stop. Notice the slight tension in your forearms as you hold the position.
3. Keeping your arms out and your hands bent, rotate your hands outward as far as you can and hold this stretch. Aim to have your thumbs pointing up and your pinkie fingers pointing down.
4. Slowly repeat arm stretches for one minute as tolerated.

Exercise B: Leg stretch

1. If you can move your legs, try to "draw" letters on the floor with the toes of your foot. Write your name with one foot.
2. Write your name with the toes of your other foot.
3. Slowly repeat the movements for one minute as tolerated.

Exercise C: Reach for the sky

1. Reach your hands as far over your head as you can to stretch your spine.
2. Move your hands and arms as if you are climbing a rope.
3. Slowly repeat the movements for one minute as tolerated.

Range of motion exercises

Exercise A: Shoulder roll

1. Let your arms hang loosely at your sides.
2. Lift just your shoulders up toward your ears, then let them relax back down.
3. When your shoulders feel loose, rotate your shoulders in backward and forward circles.
4. Do shoulder rolls slowly for one minute as tolerated.

Exercise B: March in place

1. As if you are marching, pump your arms and lift your legs up and down. Lift your knees as high as you can.
 - If you are unable to lift your knees, just pump your arms and move your ankles and feet up and down.
2. March in place for one minute as tolerated.

Exercise C: Seated jumping jacks

1. Let your arms hang down straight.
2. Keeping your arms straight, lift them up over your head. Aim to point your fingers to the ceiling.
3. While you lift your arms, straighten your legs and slide your heels along the floor to your sides, as wide as you can.
4. As you bring your arms back down to your sides, slide your legs back together.
 - If you are unable to use your legs, just move your arms.
5. Slowly repeat seated jumping jacks for one minute as tolerated.

Strengthening exercises

Exercise A: Shoulder squeeze

1. Hold your arms straight out from your body to your sides, with your elbows bent and your fists pointed at the ceiling.
2. Keeping your arms in the bent position, move them forward so your elbows and forearms meet in front of your face.
3. Open your arms back out as wide as you can with your elbows still bent, until you feel your shoulder blades squeezing together. Hold for 5 seconds.
4. Slowly repeat the movements forward and backward for one minute as tolerated.

Contact a health care provider if:

- You have to stop exercising due to any of the following:
 - Pain.
 - Nausea.
 - Shortness of breath.
 - Dizziness.
 - Fatigue.
- You have significant pain or soreness after exercising.

Get help right away if:

- You have chest pain.
- You have difficulty breathing.

These symptoms may represent a serious problem that is an emergency. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.). Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Summary

- Exercises that you do while sitting (*chair exercises*) can strengthen your heart, burn calories, and keep muscles and joints healthy.
- You may benefit from chair exercises if you are unable to do standing exercises due to diabetic foot pain, obesity, recovery from surgery or injury, or other conditions.
- Before starting chair exercises, check with your health care provider or a physical therapist to find out how much exercise you can tolerate and which exercises are safe for you.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Physical Activity Log

Staying physically active is important for your health. Your health care provider may recommend a physical activity plan that includes:

- Endurance (*aerobic*) exercise. Examples include running, swimming, or biking.
- Strength exercise. Examples include using weights or resistance bands.
- Balance and flexibility exercise. Examples include using a stability ball, doing yoga or tai chi, or stretching.

Contact your health care provider before you start any exercise routine. Ask your health care provider:

- What activities are safe for you.
- How many hours or minutes you should exercise each week.
- What can be done to stay safe when exercising.

Endurance exercise

My goal is to do _____ hours and _____ minutes of endurance exercise each week.

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Strength exercise

My goal is to do _____ hours and _____ minutes of strength exercise each week.

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Balance and flexibility exercise

My goal is to do _____ hours and _____ minutes of balance and flexibility exercise each week.

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

- Activity: _____
- Total hours or minutes: _____

Date: _____

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