





4

Sample exercises



Many types of physical activity can improve your health and future independence. Whether you do the exercises shown in this chapter or other physical activities that accomplish the same goals, gradually work your way up to include stretching, balance, flexibility and endurance activities.

This chapter provides exercises, tips and ideas for four main types of physical activity:

-  • Strength
-  • Balance
-  • Flexibility, and
-  • Endurance



Each exercise in this guide will show you where the exercise covers more than one type of physical activity. For example, toe stand exercises for strength can also help to improve your balance. Usually each exercise also provides progression options to help you choose an exercise level that is suitable for your starting point.

How much, how often

As discussed in [Chapter 3 – Go!](#), it is important to mix up the types of physical activity to increase the health benefits to you. The aim is to do a range of physical activities that incorporate strength, balance and flexibility and endurance to reach at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. If you lift weights, alternate these exercises with time on the treadmill or exercise bike. End your routine with stretching exercises. If you focus mainly on endurance activities, be sure to also add stretching, balance and strength exercises to your routine.

An example weekly physical activity program that covers all four types of activity using the exercises in this chapter is presented in the workbook. You can use the Weekly Physical Activity Plan in your workbook to help you plan your own program.

Warm up / cool down

It's important to spend about 5 minutes at the beginning and end of your routine to warm up and cool down. Warming up and cooling down give your muscles a chance to get ready to work and gradually return to rest at the end. These 'before-and-after' activities help prevent injury and reduce muscle soreness later. Here are a few suggestions:

- Do some light endurance activity first, such as walking for 5 minutes
- If you're going to be walking briskly or running, gradually build up to that pace
- At the end of your activity, gradually slow down and let your body cool down
- Do a few exercises to work the muscles and joints you'll be using in your activity. For example, if you're going to be swimming, do a few arm exercises first to warm up your arms and shoulders.

Safety !!?

No matter which type of physical activity you are doing, there are certain safety tips that will help you to get the best benefits from physical activity.

- Talk with your doctor or health professional if you are planning to significantly increase your level of physical activity.
- Talk with your doctor or health professional if you are unsure about doing a particular exercise. For example, if you've had hip or back surgery/problems, talk about which exercises might be best for you.

- Don't hold your breath during exercises. Holding your breath while straining can cause changes in blood pressure. This is especially true for people with heart disease.
- Breathe regularly. Breathe in slowly through your nose and breathe out slowly through your mouth. If this is not comfortable or possible, breathe in and out through either your nose or mouth.
- Proper form, technique and safety go hand-in-hand. Concentrate on stabilising your core body by tightening your abdomen and back muscles while performing exercises.
- Keep your body in the correct alignment with your back straight and your hips under your shoulders. This is very important to avoid a back injury.
- Avoid 'locking' your arm and leg joints in a tightly straightened position. Keep your knees and elbows slightly bent to avoid injury.

Progressing

To help you build up your strength, balance, flexibility and endurance over time, most exercises in this book have three levels of progression – 1, 2 and 3. The exercise description and illustrations show the base level (**Level 1**) for each exercise. This is great place to start. As your muscles strengthen, your balance and flexibility improve and your cardiovascular fitness increases, you may be able to progress to a higher level of physical activity.

Progression levels 2 & 3 provide hints on how you can gradually increase the difficulty of the exercises and continue to build on the benefits of physical activity over time. If you are already pretty active, then the higher progression levels may be a more suitable starting point for you.



Quick tips

- Challenge yourself, but listen to your body, and use common sense when you're physically active.
- If you feel sick or have pain during or after physical activity, you might be overdoing it.
- While you want to feel like you have done something, doing too much could leave you feeling exhausted, injured or with sore joints and muscles that stop you being physically active.
- Take it slow and gradually build up the intensity for the best ongoing benefits.
- None of the exercises in this guide should cause severe pain. If they do you might need to see an exercise specialist.

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3