



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



EASY EXERCISES

A CHAIR BASED
PROGRAMME
FOR OLDER ADULTS

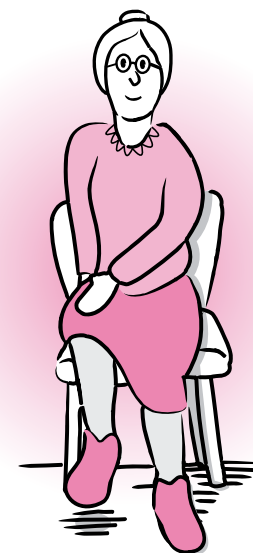
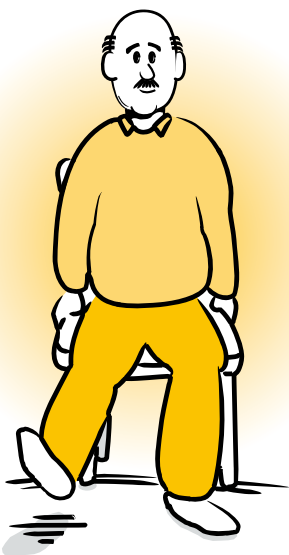


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Foreword

The overall vision of the 'Healthy Ireland' framework is a place “where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility.” One of the targets in both 'Healthy Ireland' and the 'National Physical Activity Plan' is to increase the proportion of the population undertaking regular exercise.

The health service has a key role in the promotion of physical activity through ensuring greater awareness of the role physical activity plays in the prevention and treatment of disease and in the creation of a healthy lifestyle. This booklet is designed to help people with limited mobility participate in a chair based programme. The aim is that it will be within their capabilities but also offer the many benefits of physical activity.

Several studies provide support for the numerous benefits gained from being more active: reduced chronic disease, increased longevity, improved physical and mental health, as well as independence and improved quality of life in later years. The National Physical Activity Guidelines recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity at least 5 days a week, however this may not be appropriate for adults who are currently inactive or have limited movement.

The chair based exercises in this booklet, although low-intensity, will still encourage inactive people to develop healthy activity habits. Participating in these exercises will help individuals with limited movement to carry out the everyday activities that are essential to living as independently as possible.

Initially, this booklet was distributed as part of the Heartwatch programme but it has since been found to be a useful resource in a variety of settings, such as day care centres, nursing homes, health centres and active retirement groups. It has been reprinted for wider distribution and it is hoped that it will have a positive effect on participants' health and wellbeing.

Dr. Cate Hartigan
Head of Health Promotion and Improvement,
Health & Wellbeing, HSE.

Why be active?

“Physical Activity is the single most useful thing that individuals can do to maintain their health and function and quality of life.” (World Health Organisation, 1997)

Many research studies have reported the benefits of physical activity for older adults and individuals with limited movement. Although you may not be able to go for a jog or even a walk there is still a lot you can do! We hope that you will find this booklet helpful as it guides you through a short and simple chair exercise routine. The exercises can be done at your own pace at home, on your own or with friends. The exercises will help build your strength and flexibility and may bring you many other benefits, such as:

CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF:

- **Diabetes**
- **Obesity**
- **Osteoporosis**
- **Heart disease / Cholesterol**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Arthritis**
- **Cancer**

- **Improved self-esteem**
- **Reduced depression**
- **Reduced anxiety and stress**
- **Improved overall well-being**

- **Increased joint mobility**
- **Improved balance**
- **Falls prevention**
- **Increased reaction time**
- **Improved ability to carry out activities of daily living**

How will chair exercises help?

Research shows that you need to do 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a day to gain many health benefits. However, some of these benefits will be experienced even by doing low intensity gentle exercise, such as the exercises in this booklet.

These chair exercises are aimed at improving your ability to carry out your daily activities and so focus on:

→ MOBILITY

i.e. improving your ability to reach, grasp and move about

→ STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE

i.e. improving your ability to carry, push and pull, lift

→ BALANCE

i.e. improving your ability to move about with ease, improve reactions

→ AEROBIC FITNESS

i.e. slightly improving your ability to sustain activities such as walking

Safety Advice!

Before you start this exercise programme it is recommended you talk to your doctor. It is a good idea to bring this booklet to your doctor or physiotherapist and ask them if they think the programme is suitable for you.

- ➔ Avoid all jerky or sudden movements and rapid twisting or turning of any part of your body.
- ➔ Do not tilt your head backwards as it can cause dizziness and other problems.
- ➔ You should wait up to 2 hours after eating a meal, smoking or drinking alcohol before you exercise.
- ➔ Never exercise when you are injured or sick.
- ➔ If you get pains in your chest, dizziness or severe shortness of breath when you are exercising, stop immediately and contact your GP.

**AND REMEMBER: WHERE THERE IS PAIN AND STRAIN... THERE IS NO GAIN.
EXERCISE SHOULD BE FUN AND ENJOYABLE!**

Before you start...

→ CHAIR

Make sure that the chair you use is sturdy and stable and on an even surface. An upright chair without arms is ideal. It will encourage better posture and give you space for arm exercises. However, if you have poor balance consider using a chair with arm rests for support. Your thighs should be parallel to the floor and your feet resting flat on the floor.

→ POSTURE

It is important that you **'Sit Tall'** during all the exercises. Sitting Tall is explained on the next page.

→ PACE

You should always go at a pace that is comfortable for you. Pay attention to how your body feels each day and adjust your pace as you need to. Gradually as you get fitter you may find your pace increasing.

→ MUSIC

Playing upbeat music in the background can add some fun to your programme – just be careful not to get too carried away!

→ PARTNER

Having a partner, friend or family member do the exercises with you can help keep you motivated.

→ CLOTHING

Wear comfortable clothes to exercise in. Dress in layers so as you get warmer you can take off a layer and then put it back on as you cool-down. Be sure to wear flat supportive footwear that have non-slip soles.

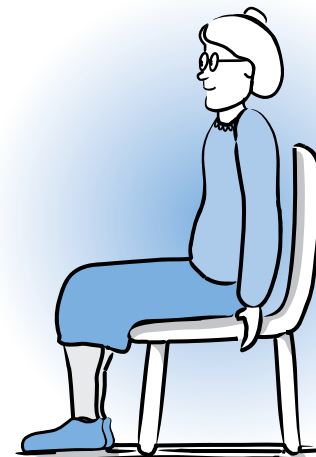
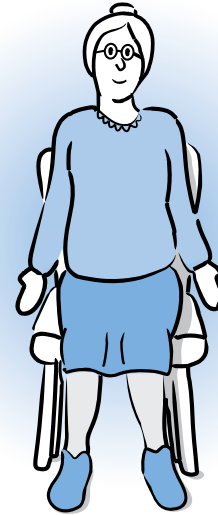
Sit Tall - The starting position for all exercises

It is important that you maintain good posture during the exercises. You can do this by sitting up straight toward the front of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor.

Make sure that your shoulders are directly over your hips and that your spine isn't rounded into the back of the chair.

Look forward with your shoulders square to the front and your arms hanging relaxed at your sides. Your chin should be parallel to the floor and your head upright.

Breathe deeply and slowly.



How to do the programme

- ➔ Start by doing the warm-up on page 11 – warm-ups are an essential part of any exercise programme.
- ➔ After your warm-up choose a few exercises from the Joint Jigglers section and then from the Muscle Movers section. Gradually build up to completing all the exercises in these sections in one go.
- ➔ The number of repetitions listed, or the time suggested to continue an exercise, are **guidelines only**. Aim to gradually build up to the guidelines but always pay attention to how you are feeling during the exercises and adjust the level to suit you. The most important thing is to go at a pace that is comfortable for you.
- ➔ Always finish with the cool-down suggestions on page 32.
- ➔ Aim to do the routine up to 3 times a week. To add some variety you could play some of your favourite music while you do the exercises.
- ➔ On the days you exercise try to do the programme at the same time of the day and ideally in the same place too. Having a routine helps create a healthy habit!

The Programme

Wiggling Warm-ups

Beginning with a warm-up will help prepare your body for the main exercises.

Joint Jigglers

It is important to keep your joints flexible and maintain their 'range of motion' or the degree to which you can move them about.

Muscle Movers

Improving your muscle tone and strength will help reduce your risk of falls and keep you strong and healthy.

Calming Cool-downs

Cooling down after exercise allows your body to safely return to its normal resting level.

Wiggling Warm-ups

Beginning with a warm-up will help prepare your body for the main exercises.

Here are the warm-ups / cool-downs you can do:

CHAIR MARCH

ARM SWINGS

CHEST STRETCH

ARM REACHES

BODY TWIST

LEG STRETCH

You will be doing these exercises for your cool-down too.

REMEMBER:

Sit tall to start each exercise, go at your own pace and breathe normally.



WIGGLING WARM-UPS

Chair March

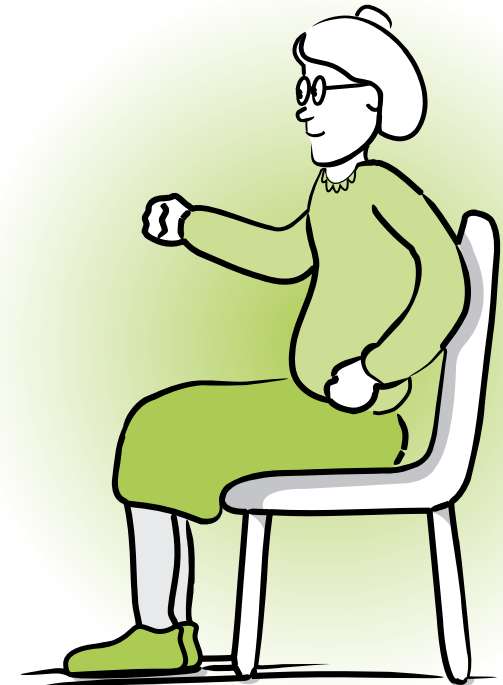
- ➔ Hold the sides of the chair
- ➔ Begin a marching action by raising your right foot and placing it down and then raising your left foot and placing it down
- ➔ Find a rhythm that is comfortable for you
- ➔ Continue for up to 60 seconds
- ➔ Now rub up and down your thighs (and your knees if you can reach safely)



WIGGLING WARM-UPS

Arm Swings

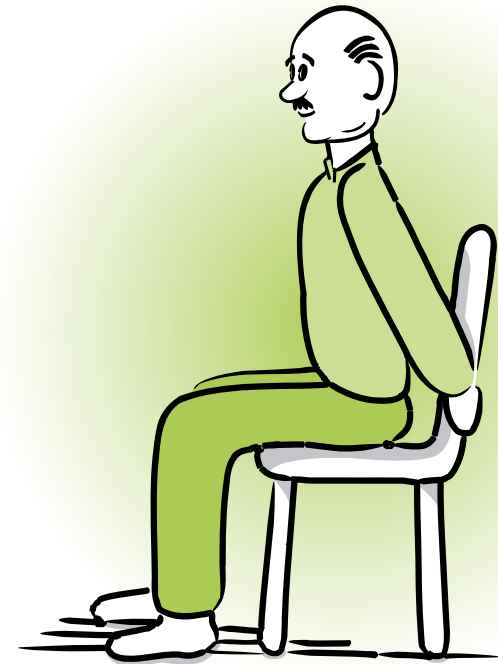
- ➔ Place your feet flat on the floor directly below your knees
- ➔ Keep your elbows bent and swing your arms from your shoulder
- ➔ Move your arms back and forth to a rhythm that is comfortable for you
- ➔ Continue this action for up to 60 seconds
- ➔ Finish by rubbing up and down your arms and then shaking your arms and hands out



WIGGLING WARM-UPS

Chest Stretch

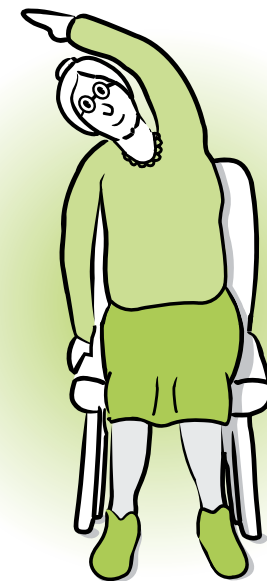
- ➔ Reach behind you with both arms and aim to hold the back of the chair
- ➔ Press your chest forwards and upwards until you feel a stretch across your chest
- ➔ Hold for up to 10 seconds
- ➔ Repeat 2 more times



WIGGLING WARM-UPS

Arm Reaches

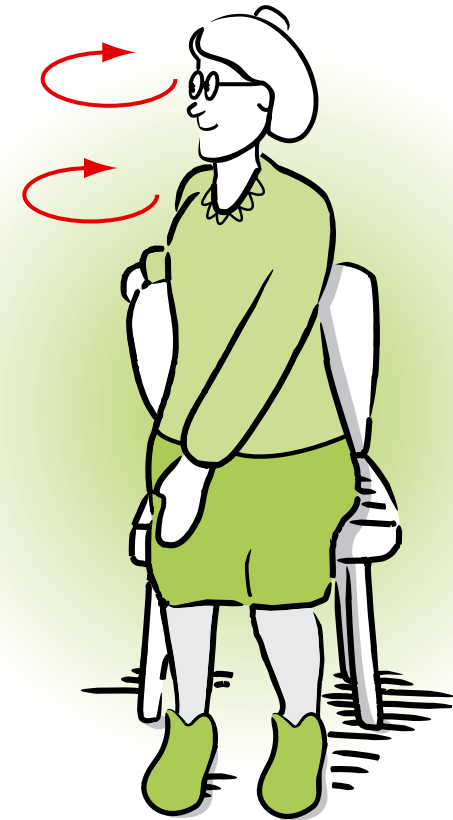
- ➔ Hold the sides of the chair
- ➔ Keeping your right hand in place, raise the left hand up and reach toward the ceiling and hold for up to 10 seconds
- ➔ Then, slowly lean to the right side, hold for up to 10 seconds
- ➔ Return to centre and lower your left arm
- ➔ Repeat up to 3 times on each side



WIGGLING WARM-UPS

Body Twist

- ➔ Place your left hand on your right knee and your right hand behind you on the back or side of the chair
- ➔ Keeping your back upright, slowly turn your upper body and head towards your right arm
- ➔ Hold for up to 10 seconds and slowly turn back to starting position
- ➔ Repeat on the opposite side
- ➔ Repeat up to 3 times on each side



WIGGLING WARM-UPS

Leg Stretch

- ➔ Slide forward on the chair and straighten your right leg out in front with your heel to the floor and your toes pointing to the ceiling
- ➔ Place both hands on your left thigh for balance
- ➔ Slowly lean forwards while keeping your back straight and chest out
- ➔ Stop when you feel a comfortable stretch in the back of your right leg
- ➔ Hold for up to 20 seconds and then repeat on the right leg



Joint Jigglers

It is important to keep your joints flexible and maintain their 'range of motion' or the degree to which you can move them about.

Here are the exercises you can try in this section:

NECK TILTS & TURNS

SHOULDER CIRCLES

CRISS CROSSING

HANDYWORK

KNEES AND HIPS

FOOT TAPS

REMEMBER:

Sit tall to start each exercise, go at your own pace and breathe normally.



JOINT JIGGLERS

Neck Tilts & Turns

- ➔ Slowly tilt your right ear towards your right shoulder (Fig. a)
 - ➔ Hold for a few seconds and bring your head back to centre
 - ➔ Repeat to left side
-
- ➔ Tilt your head down so your chin moves towards your chest (Fig. b)
 - ➔ Hold for a few seconds and bring your head back to centre (**Do not tilt your head backward!**).
-
- ➔ Turn your head to the right and look over your right shoulder and slowly return to centre (Fig. c)
 - ➔ Repeat to left side



Fig. a



Fig. b

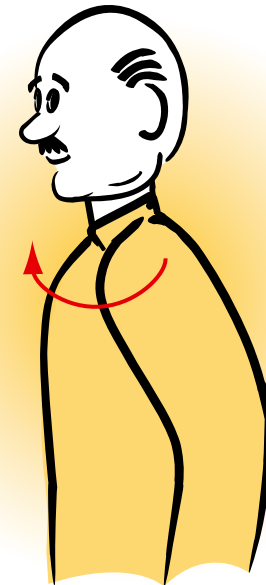
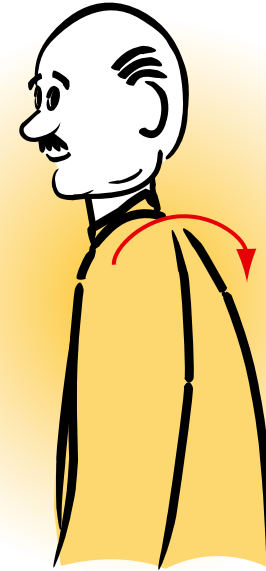


Fig. c

JOINT JIGGLERS

Shoulder Circles

- ➔ Relax your arms by your sides
- ➔ Move both shoulders in a slow circular motion:
forwards, up toward your ears,
backwards and down
- ➔ Continue for 5 circles
- ➔ Now repeat in the reverse direction



JOINT JIGGLERS

Criss Crossing

- ➔ Keeping your arms straight, criss cross your arms in front of your body with a scissoring action
 - ➔ Keep the action moving up and down in front of your body (Fig. a)
 - ➔ Continue for up to 30 seconds
-
- ➔ Wind your lower arms around in circular motion (as if winding wool) (Fig. b)
 - ➔ Continue for up to 30 seconds and then reverse the direction

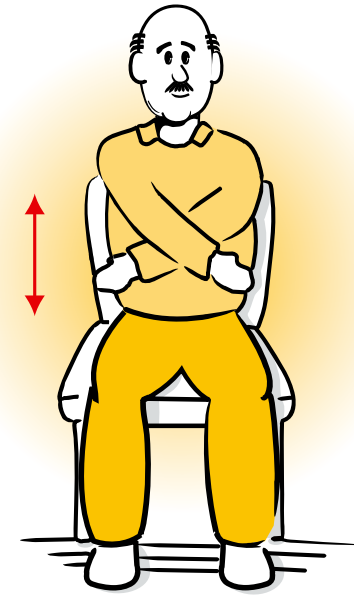


Fig. a

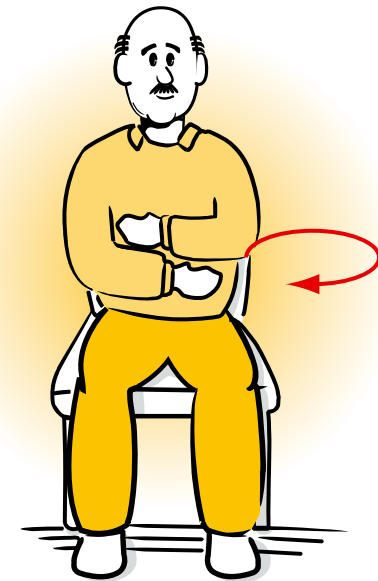


Fig. b

JOINT JIGGLERS

Handywork

➔ Clench your fists and twist your wrists in opposite directions (as if you are wringing out wet clothes), continue for up to 20 seconds (Fig. a)

➔ Move your wrists in circular motions, up to 5 times in each direction (Fig. b)

➔ Squeeze your fists tightly and then spread your fingers out wide, repeat up to 8 times (Fig. c)

➔ Bend your fingers slightly and move them as if you were playing the piano (Fig. d)

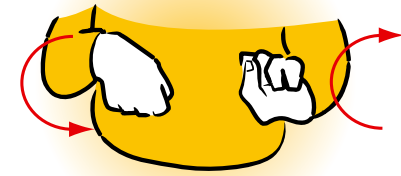


Fig. a

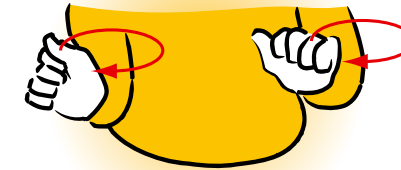


Fig. b

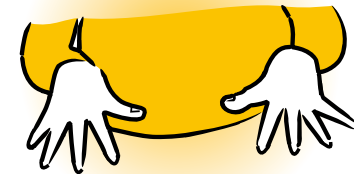


Fig. c



Fig. d

JOINT JIGGLERS

Knees and Hips

- ➔ Raise your right foot up so your leg is straight. Then lower your foot back down, alternate between right and left legs for up to 20 seconds (Fig. a)
- ➔ Straighten your right leg out and hold, turn your leg to the right so your toes are pointing to the right, then turn leg to the left (Fig. b)
- ➔ Repeat up to 5 times in each direction and then repeat on the left leg
- ➔ March both feet out to the sides as far as comfortable and back in again. Repeat up to 5 times (Fig. c)

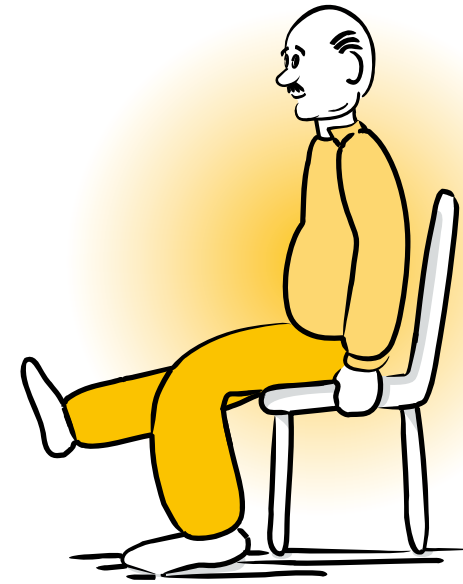


Fig. a

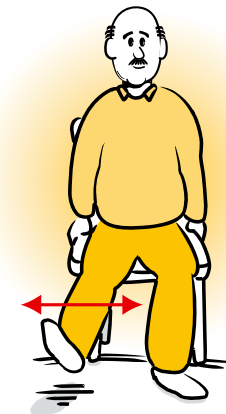


Fig. b

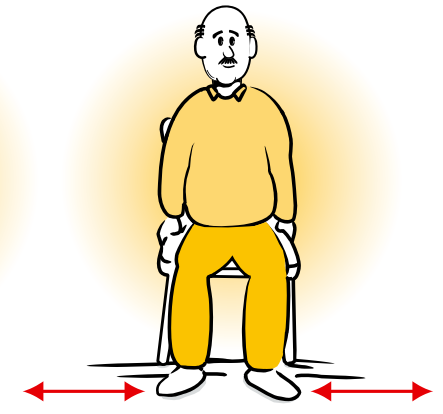


Fig. c

JOINT JIGGLERS

Foot Taps

- ➔ Hold the sides of the chair
- ➔ Place the heel of the right foot on the floor and point your toes up (Fig. a)
- ➔ Then lower your toes to the floor and raise your heels up (Fig. b)
Repeat up to 10 times with each foot
- ➔ Raise your right foot up and make circles with your toes (Fig. c)
- ➔ Repeat up to 5 times in each direction with each foot

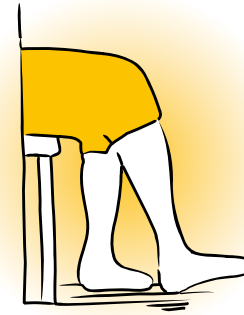


Fig. a



Fig. b

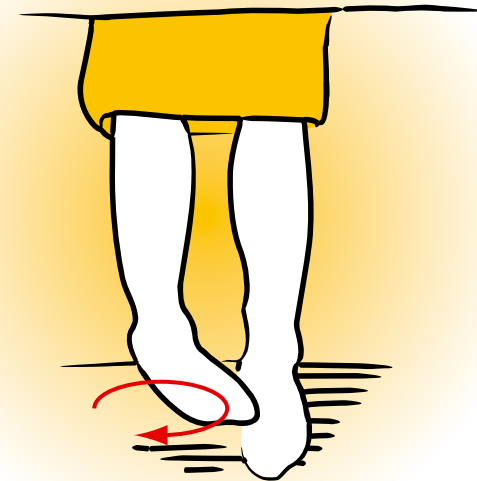


Fig. c

Muscle Movers

Improving your muscle tone and strength will help reduce your risk of falls and keep you strong and healthy.

Here are the exercises you can do in this section:

BICEP CURL

BOXER

KNEE TAPS

LEG EXTEND

SIT TO STAND

LEG CIRCLES

REMEMBER:

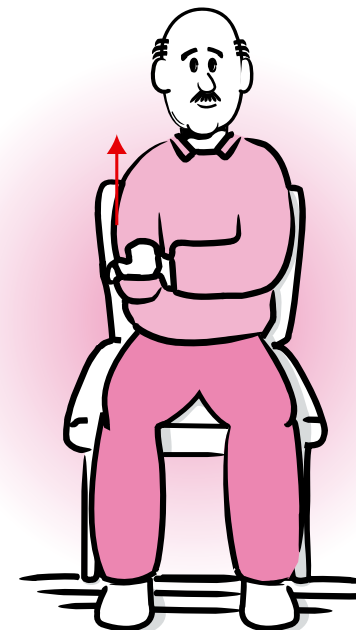
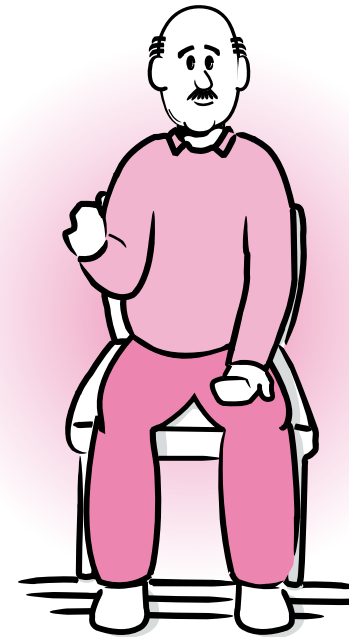
Sit tall to start each exercise, go at your own pace and breathe normally.



MUSCLE MOVERS

Bicep Curl

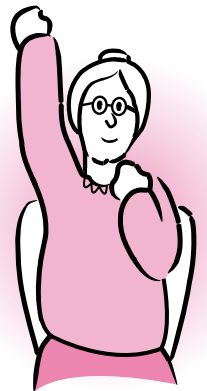
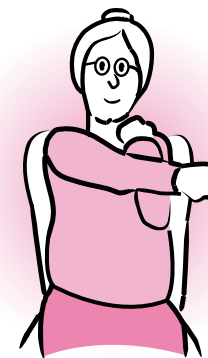
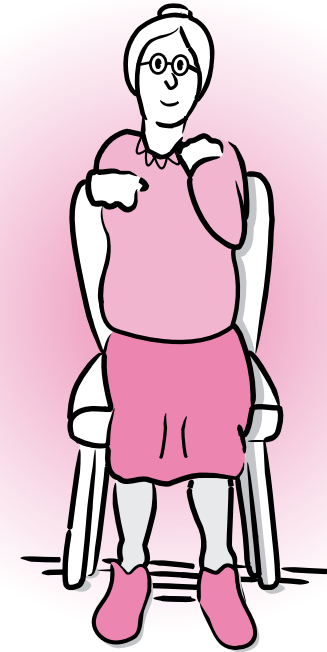
- ➔ Place your hands on your thighs, palms facing up
- ➔ Bend your right elbow and bring your hand toward your right shoulder and slowly lower back down
- ➔ Alternate right and left arms or use both at the same time and continue for up to 30 seconds
- ➔ You can also try placing your left hand on your right forearm and pushing down to resist the bicep curl, repeat on other side



MUSCLE MOVERS

Boxer

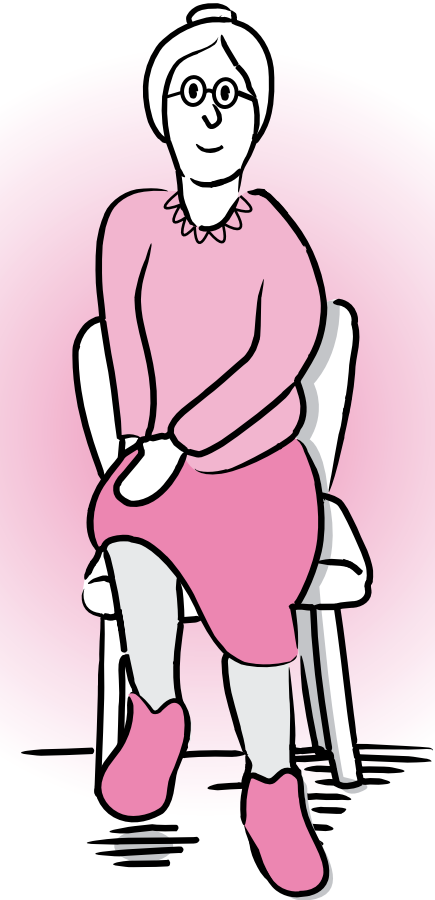
- ➔ Place your fists at shoulder level beneath your chin
- ➔ Smoothly reach your right arm straight out and slowly bring it back to starting position
- ➔ Do up to 10 punches on each side
- ➔ Repeat punching to the side and then straight up toward the ceiling



MUSCLE MOVERS

Knee Taps

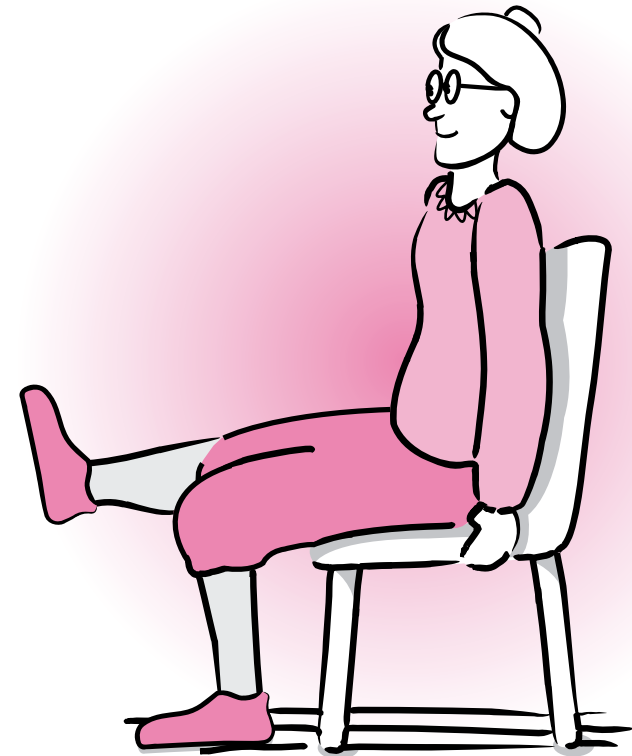
- ➔ Lift your right foot about 4 inches from the floor and touch your left hand to your right knee
- ➔ Hold for a few seconds and slowly release, do up to 10 on each side
- ➔ If you feel able try touching your left elbow to right knee and then right elbow to left knee



MUSCLE MOVERS

Leg Extend

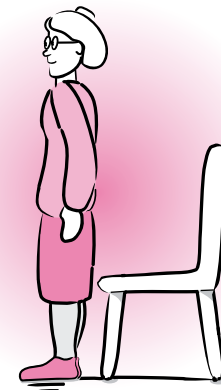
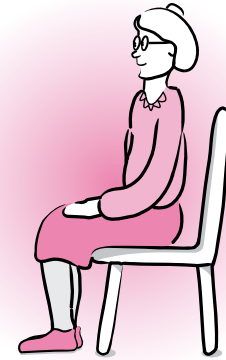
- ➔ Hold onto the side of the chair
- ➔ Raise your right foot as you straighten your leg out in front of you
- ➔ Hold for up to 5 seconds and slowly lower back down
- ➔ Repeat up to 5 times on each leg



MUSCLE MOVERS

Sit to Stand

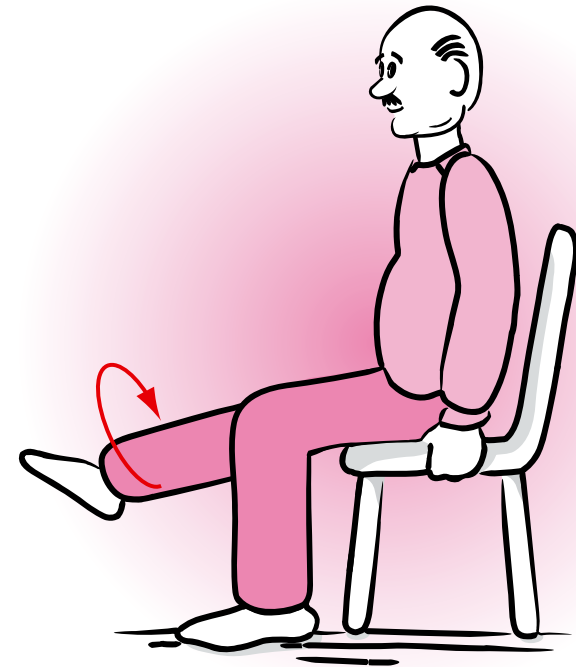
- ➔ Move forward in the chair and place your feet slightly behind your knees
- ➔ Lean forward with a straight back and stand up
- ➔ Use your hands for support if needed but try to aim toward standing without using your hands
- ➔ Slowly lower back down into the chair and repeat up to 5 times



MUSCLE MOVERS

Leg Circles

- ➔ Hold onto the sides of the chair
- ➔ Straighten your right leg out in front of you and point your toes
- ➔ Make 3 circles to the right and 3 circles to the left - make sure you are moving your whole leg
- ➔ Repeat on the left leg



Calming Cool-downs

Cooling down after exercise allows your body to safely return to its normal resting level.

Cool down by chair marching (see page 12) at a slow comfortable pace for 1-2 minutes.
Then repeat the remaining stretches from the warm-up section at a gentle pace.

ARM SWINGS - *Page 13*

CHEST STRETCH - *Page 14*

ARM REACHES - *Page 15*

BODY TWIST - *Page 16*

LEG STRETCH - *Page 17*

REMEMBER:

Sit tall to start each exercise, go at your own pace and breathe normally.



After the session

After your cool-down it is a good idea to take a few minutes to relax, why not try the following breathing exercise...

Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes

Gradually begin to deepen your breathing so that you are filling your lungs completely as you inhale and breathing out slowly as you exhale.

Repeat this for 10 breaths trying to keep your attention on the flow of your breath

Relax in the chair for a while if you wish and then return to your daily activities with ease and hopefully a lighter step!

Well done! You have finished your chair exercises for today!

This is a good time to fill in your exercise diary. You can do this by simply checking off the exercises you did today. See the sample on the next page and then fill in your diary on page 35. (Feel free to photocopy the blank diaries if you wish to continue to use them.)

Aim to do your exercises again in 2-3 days and enjoy becoming healthier and happier!

Exercise Diary - Sample

	Day: <i>Mon</i>	Day: <i>Wed</i>	Day: <i>Fri</i>	Day: <i>Mon</i>	Day: <i>Wed</i>	Day: <i>Fri</i>
	Date: <i>3rd May</i>	Date: <i>5th May</i>	Date: <i>7th May</i>	Date: <i>10th May</i>	Date: <i>12th May</i>	Date: <i>14th May</i>
Warm-up	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JJ - Neck Tilts & Turns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JJ - Shoulder Circles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JJ - Criss Crossing		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JJ - Handywork					✓	✓
JJ - Knees and Hips						✓
JJ - Foot Taps	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
MM - Bicep Curl	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
MM - Boxer		✓		✓		✓
MM - Knee Taps					✓	✓
MM - Leg Extend			✓		✓	✓
MM - Sit to Stand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MM - Leg Circles			✓	✓	✓	✓
Cool-down	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Exercise Diary

	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:
	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Warm-up						
JJ - Neck Tilts & Turns						
JJ - Shoulder Circles						
JJ - Criss Crossing						
JJ - Handywork						
JJ - Knees and Hips						
JJ - Foot Taps						
MM - Bicep Curl						
MM - Boxer						
MM - Knee Taps						
MM - Leg Extend						
MM - Sit to Stand						
MM - Leg Circles						
Cool-down						

Exercise Diary

	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:
	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Warm-up						
JJ - Neck Tilts & Turns						
JJ - Shoulder Circles						
JJ - Criss Crossing						
JJ - Handywork						
JJ - Knees and Hips						
JJ - Foot Taps						
MM - Bicep Curl						
MM - Boxer						
MM - Knee Taps						
MM - Leg Extend						
MM - Sit to Stand						
MM - Leg Circles						
Cool-down						

Exercise Diary

	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:
	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Warm-up						
JJ - Neck Tilts & Turns						
JJ - Shoulder Circles						
JJ - Criss Crossing						
JJ - Handywork						
JJ - Knees and Hips						
JJ - Foot Taps						
MM - Bicep Curl						
MM - Boxer						
MM - Knee Taps						
MM - Leg Extend						
MM - Sit to Stand						
MM - Leg Circles						
Cool-down						

For further information on physical activity please contact:

HSE Dublin North East:

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