



Standing Exercises & Stretches

Hip Abduction and Extension

Standing with one hand on a wall, desk or countertop for support, lift the outside leg away from the body. Keep it in line or slightly behind the body, and the toes pointing forward. You should feel this in the side of your hip and your bottom. Strengthening the hips keeps us stable when walking or standing on one leg, like when we use stairs. Keep the upper body straight as you do this; don't lean to the side. Switch sides.

Next, standing straight, extend one leg behind you as far as you can without arching your back or leaning forward. You can do a variation of this with the knee bent if that's easier, keeping your toes pointed down. This exercise works on the muscles at your bottom and back of the upper leg which are important for low back support, hip alignment, posture and stability. Switch sides when ready.

Standing Calf Raises and Marching

Put one hand on a wall, desk or countertop for support if needed and push through the toes to lift the heels as high as you can. This should be an even and controlled motion both up and down. As it gets easier, try to use less or no support. This exercise improves blood flow, strength and stability in the lower leg.

Now go back to using that support if needed and lift the knees as high as you can, alternating legs each time. Working on raising the knee and foot high up is useful to make things like climbing stairs, getting in or out of the bath, or stepping over something on the floor or sidewalk easier.

Do this without support when you are ready. It's okay if you sway a *little* bit as you switch sides, just keep the back straight and try to put the foot back down in the same spot.

Standing Posture

Poor posture can look like slouching, with the head forward and tailbone tucked under. You will notice it is harder to take a good full breath in this position, and it puts a lot of strain and tension on the upper back and neck. Poor posture can also be the opposite, with the low back arched and the head and shoulders pinched back.

To find a better posture, start by bring the head in line with the shoulders, with the chin slightly tucked down to make the back of the neck long. Lift the shoulders up towards the ears, squeeze them back and then press them down like you're trying to tuck them in your back pockets. Then relax them. The weight in your feet should be both on the heel and the ball of the foot.

Your ankles, knees, hips, ribs, shoulders and head should be stacked neatly over each other. Check in with your body throughout the day to see how you're doing with this.



COVID PHYSICAL THERAPY

Supported Lunges

Put a pillow or towel on the floor in front of you and step over it. Bend the back knee so it goes straight down towards the pillow, or as close as you can get while still being able to get back up. Use the wall or another stable surface for support. Keep the front knee behind the toes. The wider your legs are, the more stable you will be, and the narrower, the harder this will be. Keep the back straight and the back heel off the ground. As it gets easier, try using less or no support. Switch sides and repeat.

Lunges work on your balance, strength and stability at the lower legs and hips, and can make it easier to get up from the floor.

Supported Squats (variation of sit-to-stand)

Set a chair behind you and have a stable surface in front of you. Stand with feet a bit more than shoulder width apart, and move your hips back like you're going to sit in the chair. Push through the feet and come back up before you make contact. Take care to keep the knees behind your toes and moving in line with the second or third toe. As you start to feel more stable and strong, put the arms across the chest or in front of you and try to do the squat without any support at all. If you lose your balance or get tired, find the armrests or edge of the chair and sit down for a quick rest break.

Doing this exercise makes it easier to get up from a chair, off the toilet, and out of bed.

Balancing Exercises

Our balance and stability might not be great after a long time of inactivity and illness. This can affect how safe we are moving around our homes, like when we get up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night. Here are several different ways you can challenge your balance, so you start to feel strong and confident on your feet again.

You can make each of these exercises tougher by closing your eyes, or turning your head, moving your arms up or out, or standing on something soft, like a folded towel.

First, bring your feet side by side. Have something nearby that you can use to steady yourself if needed, but don't rely on it to keep you upright. Try to hold this for at least 30 seconds.

Next, have one foot slightly in front of the other. It's okay if you sway a bit.

Finally, put one foot in front of the other, heel to toe if you can. This can be pretty challenging. Switch sides and see if you feel more stable with the other leg in front. At all times keep something close by for support if needed. Again, aim to hold this for at least 30 seconds.

Work on the balance exercise that feel right for you. This is usually the exercise where you don't need to hold on to the support surface all the time or at all while still feeling challenged. Again, you can always make it harder by trying one of the techniques described above.



COVID PHYSICAL THERAPY

Wall Push Ups

Put your hands on the wall at chest height. Bring your feet closer together. Bend at the elbows to bring your face closer to the wall, moving as one straight line from your head to your heels. Exhale as you push the wall away.

As this gets easier, move the feet farther away, and the hands lower down on the wall. Repeat, exhaling on the push away and bending the elbows alongside the body.

If you have wrist issues that make this painful to do with your hands flat on the wall, try using a closed fist with the thumb side up. Go as close to the wall as you can while still being able to push yourself back up, and don't hold your breath.

As this gets easier, you can further increase the angle by using a stable countertop or desk, and eventually, the floor.

Wall Squats

Step out about two footlengths from a wall, then put feet a bit wider than shoulder width apart at that distance. Use your hands and bottom and find the wall behind you. Slide down. The knees should stay behind the toes as you move down, and your bottom should stay in contact with the wall. Don't go past a 90° angle at the knees and push evenly through the feet to get upright. If you need help getting back to a standing position, use the wall to help yourself back up. Have a stable surface nearby that you can pull up on if needed, like a countertop.

Wall squats are a good starting point if you don't yet feel steady or safe doing supported or unsupported squats.

There are several other techniques we intend to add to this list and to our video collection over the coming weeks and months. Please get in touch if you would like to be informed when we update these resources.