

Chair exercises you can print

12 gentle seated moves. Print this page or save it as a PDF.

Use a sturdy chair without wheels, back to a wall.

1 Seated mountain

- ① Sit toward the front half of a sturdy chair with no wheels, with its back against a wall.
- ② Put your feet flat on the floor, about hip-width apart, knees over ankles.
- ③ Rest your hands on your thighs, palms down.
- ④ Lengthen up through the crown of your head. Let your shoulders drop away from your ears.
- ⑤ Breathe in through your nose for 4 counts, then breathe out slowly for 4 counts. Stay for 5 to 8 breaths.



Easier: Sit back against the chair back and take 3 breaths.

Take care:

- Back: sit tall without arching. Think long, not stiff.
- Stand up slowly when you finish.

2 Shoulder rolls

- ① Sit tall on a sturdy chair, feet flat, arms hanging loose. Or stand tall with a wall, counter or chair back within reach.
- ② Breathe in and lift your shoulders gently toward your ears.
- ③ Roll them back and down in a slow circle as you breathe out.
- ④ Do 5 slow rolls backward, then 5 slow rolls forward.
- ⑤ Let your arms hang heavy the whole time.



Easier: Make the circles smaller, or lift and drop the shoulders without rolling.

Take care:

- Sensitive shoulders: keep the circles small and stay in the range that feels easy.
- Sensitive neck: keep your head still and looking straight ahead.

3 Seated arm raise

- ① Sit tall, feet flat, arms resting by your sides.
- ② Breathe in and slowly lift both arms out to the sides and up, as high as feels comfortable.
- ③ Breathe out and lower them slowly, palms facing down.
- ④ Do 6 to 8 rounds, matching your breath.



Easier: Lift your arms only to shoulder height, or lift one arm at a time.

Take care:

- Shoulders: stop at the height where it still feels easy.
- Neck: keep your head still and your chin level.

4 Seated cat-cow

- ① Sit tall near the front of your chair, feet flat, hands on your knees.
- ② Breathe in and let your chest lift a little. Your shoulder blades slide gently down your back. This is the cow.
- ③ Breathe out and let your upper back round softly, like a cat. Keep your head up and your eyes looking ahead.
- ④ Move with your breath, 5 to 8 slow rounds.



Easier: Only do the lifting half. Or make the wave smaller and slower.

Take care:

- Back: if rounding feels sharp or pinchy, stay with the lift only.
- Neck: keep your chin level, do not tuck it hard.
- Low bone density: keep the rounding very small and never push into it with your hands.

5 Heel dig stretch

- 1 Sit tall near the front edge of a sturdy chair, feet flat.
- 2 Slide your right foot forward until your leg is nearly straight, with your knee soft. Rest your heel on the floor with your toes up.
- 3 Place your hands on your left thigh.
- 4 Breathe out and hinge forward a little from your hips, with a flat back, until you feel a gentle pull.
- 5 Hold for 4 slow breaths. Switch legs and move your hands to your other thigh.



Easier: Bend your knee more and hinge a smaller way.

Take care:

- Sensitive back: hinge only a little, chest lifted.
- Sensitive knees: keep your knee bent.
- Low bone density: keep your back long and do not round it.
- Hip replacement: keep the hinge very small, or skip it, as your surgeon or therapist advises.

6 Seated figure four

- 1 Sit tall near the front of a sturdy chair, feet flat. Hold the sides of the seat.
- 2 If you have had a hip replacement, or were told not to cross your legs, keep both feet flat and let one knee open gently to the side instead.
- 3 Otherwise lift your right foot and rest your ankle on your left thigh, just above the knee. Your right knee opens out to the side.
- 4 Sit tall. Hinge forward from the hips with a flat back only if it feels easy.
- 5 Hold for 4 slow breaths. Lower the foot and repeat on the other side.



Easier: Rest your ankle lower, on your shin. Or keep both feet flat and let one knee open gently to the side, as in step 2.

Take care:

- Sensitive knees: do not press on the bent knee.
- Sensitive hips: keep the lean tiny or skip it.
- Hip replacement, or told not to cross your legs: keep both feet flat and let one knee open to the side. Do not cross unless your surgeon has cleared it.
- Low bone density: keep your back long and do not push on your knee.

7 Seated march

- 1 Sit tall near the front of your chair, feet flat. Rest your hands on your thighs or hold the sides of the seat.
- 2 Lift your right knee a few inches. Place the foot softly down.
- 3 Lift your left knee. Keep alternating at an easy pace.
- 4 Swing your arms gently if it feels natural.
- 5 March for 30 to 60 seconds.



Easier: Lift your heels only, keeping your toes on the floor.

Take care:

- Back: sit tall rather than slumping.
- Hips: keep the lift small if a hip feels pinchy.

8 Side reach

- 1 Sit tall on a sturdy chair with your feet flat, or stand with soft knees and a hand on a chair back.
- 2 Rest your left hand on the chair seat or your thigh.
- 3 Breathe in and lift your right arm out and up, with your elbow soft.
- 4 Breathe out and lean gently to the left, keeping both hips down and your chest facing forward.
- 5 Take 3 slow breaths, come up on an in breath, and repeat on the other side.



Easier: Keep the arm low, hand resting at your side, and lean a short way.

Take care:

- Sensitive back: lean a short way and keep your belly gently supported.
- Sensitive shoulders: keep your arm below shoulder height.
- Low bone density: keep the lean small and never pull on the chair to go farther.

9 Neck release

- 1 Sit tall on a sturdy chair, feet flat.
- 2 Let your shoulders drop away from your ears.
- 3 Breathe out and slowly tip your right ear toward your right shoulder. Stop as soon as you feel a gentle stretch. Breathe 3 slow breaths.
- 4 Come back to the center on an in breath. Repeat on the left.
- 5 Finish by turning your head a little to each side.



Easier: Make the tip very small.

Take care:

- Sensitive neck: skip any head position that causes tingling or a pinch, and keep every movement small. Never roll your head in full circles or tip it back.
- Sensitive shoulders: keep both shoulders relaxed and level.
- Feeling dizzy: stop and breathe normally.

10 Chest opener

- 1 Sit tall on a sturdy chair with your feet flat, or stand tall with a wall, counter or chair back within reach.
- 2 Let your arms hang by your sides, palms facing forward.
- 3 Breathe in and slide your shoulder blades gently toward each other.
- 4 Breathe out and keep your chest lifted, with your chin level.
- 5 Hold for 3 breaths, then relax. Repeat 4 times.



Easier: Squeeze your shoulder blades only a little, or rest your hands on your thighs.

Take care:

- Sensitive shoulders: keep your arms low, close to your sides.
- Sensitive neck: keep your chin level and do not tip your head back.
- Low bone density: keep the movement small and do not arch your back.

11 Seated ankle pumps

- 1 Sit tall on your chair, its back against the wall, with your thighs resting on the seat.
- 2 Straighten your right leg a little, with your heel resting on the floor.
- 3 Point your toes away from you, then pull them back toward your shin.
- 4 Keep going at an easy pace for 10 pumps. Switch legs.
- 5 Finish with both feet flat on the floor.



Easier: Keep both heels on the floor and just lift and lower your toes.

Take care:

- Keep your thighs supported by the seat. Stand up slowly when you finish.
- If a calf muscle cramps, stop and rest your foot flat.

12 Seated warrior arms

- 1 Sit tall near the front of your chair. Take your feet wide, a little past hip-width, with your knees over your ankles.
- 2 Lift both arms out to the sides at shoulder height, palms down.
- 3 Breathe out and turn your head to look gently over your right hand.
- 4 Stay for 3 breaths, arms steady. Your hips and chest face forward.
- 5 Look back to the center. Repeat to the left. Do 2 rounds.



Easier: Rest your fingertips on your shoulders and keep your elbows out.

Take care:

- Shoulders: lower your arms if they tire. Rest and begin again.
- Hips: a narrower foot stance is fine.

Stop any move that hurts. Stop and rest if you feel chest pain or pressure, dizziness, a racing or uneven heartbeat, or unusual shortness of breath. If it is severe or does not ease with rest, call 911.