

Everyone should exercise, but it's particularly important if you have arthritis. The exercises here will help you to stretch and strengthen the areas supporting your joints.

You should try to do these exercises every day. Start very gently and gradually build up. Breathe steadily as you do the exercises. As with any physical activity, you'll need to use some common sense. It's normal to feel muscle ache but stop if you get any joint pain that doesn't go away quickly.

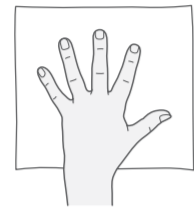
It's also important to do general fitness exercises. Swimming, walking and cycling may be good, but find something that you enjoy and stick at it. If you have any questions about exercising, speak to your doctor or physiotherapist.

Strengthening

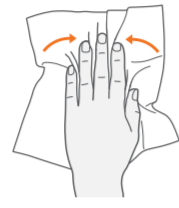
Strengthening exercises are important if you have arthritis because your joints need the support of the surrounding muscles.

Fingers

1



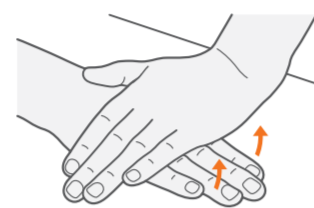
Begin with the palm of your hand on a tissue or towel on a table, fingers apart.



Pull your fingers together by pressing your hand down into the table and bunching up the towel between your fingers.

Wrists

1



Place your palm on a table and lift your fingers up away from the table.

Place your other hand across your knuckles at a right angle and push down as the hand underneath tries to pull up.

You should feel the muscles of your forearms contracting. Swap hands and repeat.

Arms

1



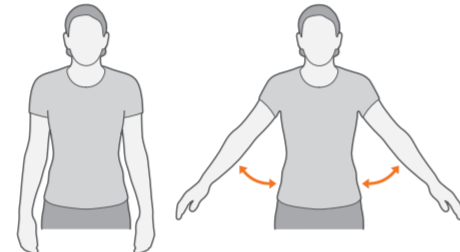
Stand with your arm straight, bend your elbow, then straighten it out again. (Try holding a weight in your hand such as a bag of sugar or a potato. If you find holding objects difficult, you can use wrist weights.)

2



Stand with a weight in each hand, or use wrist weights. Raise your arms overhead as far as you can and lower slowly.

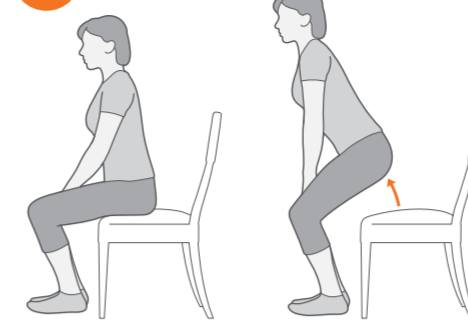
3



Stand with a weight in each hand, or use wrist weights. Place your arms by your sides. Slowly lift your arms away from your body, keeping the elbows straight. Hold for five seconds and slowly lower.

Knees

1



Stand up from a chair without using your hands for support. Repeat until you get short of breath.

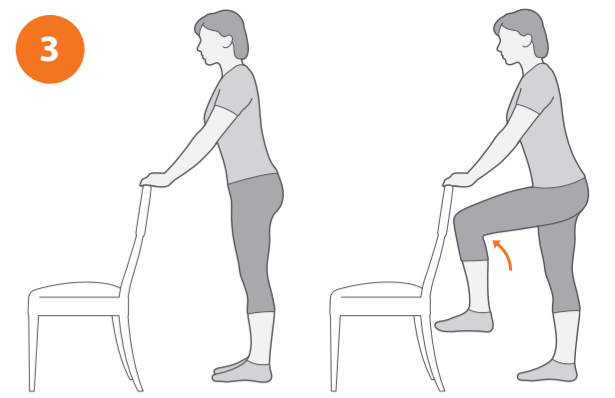
2



Step onto a stool or the bottom step of stairs with the first foot. Bring up the second foot, then step down with the first foot, followed by the second foot.

Repeat with each leg until you get short of breath. Hold on to the bannister if necessary.

3



Hold on to the back of a chair or a work surface.

Lift one knee up towards your chest as far as you can. Lower again, then repeat with the other leg.

Do as many as you can until you feel short of breath.

We recommend that you repeat each exercise five times and hold the position for 5-10 seconds, unless the instructions state otherwise. Do twice daily.

4



Sit on the edge of a table or bed. Cross your ankles over.

Push your front leg backwards and back leg forwards against each other until your thigh muscles become tense.

Hold for 10 seconds, then relax. Switch legs and repeat.

5



Sit on the edge of a table or bed, keeping an upright posture with your feet on the floor. Straighten one knee fully. Hold, then slowly lower. Repeat on the other leg. As you improve, try using ankle weights.

If your knee is hot or swollen, seek advice before using ankle weights.

Stretching

Stretching exercises (also known as 'range of movement' exercises) are designed to make sure your joints are moved as far as they safely and comfortably can be.

Fingers

1



Make a fist, then straighten your fingers.

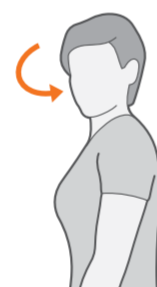
2



Bend the first two joints of your fingers down, then straighten again.

Neck

1



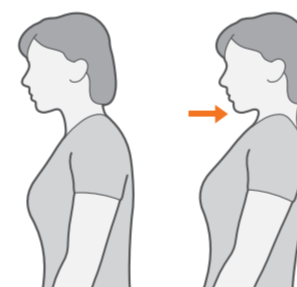
Sit with good posture. Slowly turn your head one side and then the other.

2



Sit or stand with good posture. Lower your chin to your chest, then return to the starting position.

3



Sit or stand with good posture. Keeping your head level, pull your chin back. Relax, then repeat. **Seek advice if you feel dizzy doing any of these exercises.**

Feet

1



Bend your ankle up towards your body as far as possible, then point your toes away from your body.

2



Move your ankle around slowly in a large circle. Repeat in the opposite direction.

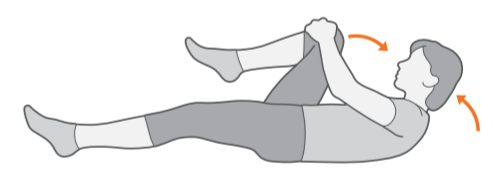
Hips

1



Sit with your knees bent and feet together. Press your knees down towards the floor, using your hands if you need to. Alternatively, lie on your back and part your knees, keeping feet together.

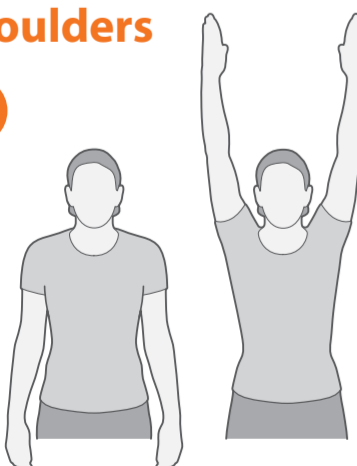
2



Lie on your back. Pull each knee to your chest in turn, keeping the other leg straight.

Shoulders

1



Stand with your arms relaxed at your sides. Raise your arms as far as you can.

2



Place your hands behind your head, then behind your back.

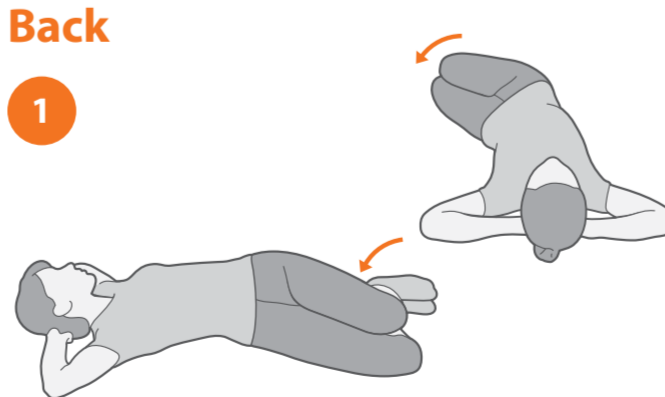
3



Lie on your back. Raise your arms overhead as far as you can.

Back

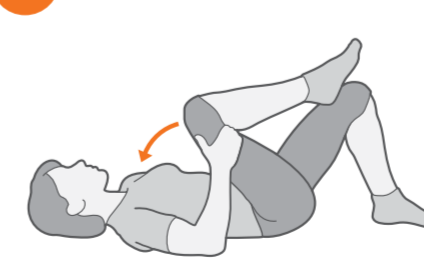
1



If you're able to, lie on your back, hands behind your head (or by your side if your shoulders are painful). Bend your knees and, keeping your feet to the floor, roll your knees to one side slowly.

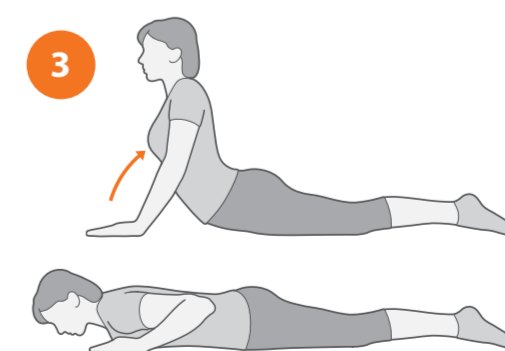
Hold this position for 10 seconds. Repeat this three times for each side.

2



Lie on your back with knees bent. Bring one knee up and pull it gently to the chest. Push your back into the floor when doing this exercise. Hold, then swap legs.

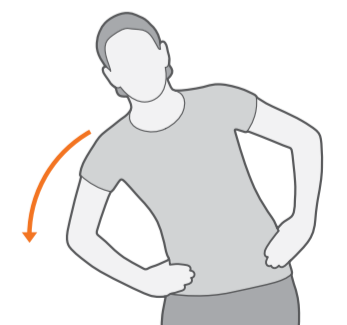
3



Lie on your front with your hands under your shoulders. Straighten your arms to push your trunk upwards, letting your hips sag to the floor.

Not recommended for people with rheumatoid arthritis who have wrist pain.

4



Place your hands on your hips and bend slowly to one side until you feel a stretch. Hold, then repeat on the other side.