

Effortless 🔄 Exercise



Dr. Harlan Kilstein

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Introduction (But please read)

Our bodies have a love hate relationship with exercise. When we were children, we didn't call it exercise. We were just having fun.

But as we got older, for most folks, exercise became something other people did. Or more likely, it became something we were going to do some day.

When I did a survey about how many people exercise and how often, by far and away the winner was: "I'm going to exercise some day ..."

Well that day has arrived.

Imagine exercising while watching a Netflix video? Or while getting your hair or nails done. Or sitting in your car in traffic, or while on the phone with a friend.

Make no mistake about it. These "effortless exercises" really work.

Some are fairly simple. Others take a bit more effort.

Bottom line, these exercises will really help your body.

Listen to your body. Do not strain yourself.

These exercises are designed to fit as many people as possible but if you have any injury, we recommend showing this program to your doctor, surgeon, or physical or occupational therapist.

Set aside time every day for some "Effortless Exercises" and watch your body change.



Chapter I: Understanding Isometrics

Disclaimer

You should always check with your doctor, medical professional, or therapist prior to beginning this or any exercise program.

If your doctor recommends against this program, ask if they object to certain exercises or the entire program.

For example, if you have injured your rotator cuff, they may recommend you not do certain exercises.

We absolutely recommend discussing things with your doctor.

There is also a good chance your doctor may love the program and want it for his other patients. Make him buy his own copy! 😊



What is isometric exercise?

An isometric exercise makes use of something called *static muscle contraction*. This occurs when a group of muscles is contracting because it is under tension but at the same time the muscle(s) involved do not change in length. Because there is no length change of the muscle, the joints move only minimally or do not move at all.

To get the feeling of how this works bend your elbows and place your palms together in front of your chest in a prayer position. Now press them together as hard as you can. Because you are applying equal pressure from both sides your arms will not move, however you will feel the tension in both your chest and arms. In a position like this one, muscle fibers are activated, but because you are pressing with equal force from both sides there is no movement.

Some isometric exercises create tension in muscles by specific positioning of the body; other poses can involve holding weights (I suggest soup cans for weights). While holding a weight, the muscles involved will fill with blood. This creates *metabolic* stress on the muscle group holding the weight which works to improve strength and endurance. Either way it turns out, it's actually possible to exercise without appearing to move at all!

Building muscle

Each of the muscles in your body is made up of many tiny fibers. In fact there are thousands of fibers in each muscle. Isometric exercises provide maximum muscle activation. This means the majority of these muscle fibers are activated when an intense isometric exercise is performed.

As you hold the tension in your targeted muscle group while doing an isometric exercise, you are actually fatiguing these muscles. Your brain is aware that these muscles were pushed to their limit and sends the message out to your body to add more muscle fiber to these fatigued muscles so the next time they are needed they will have more strength.

Your body goes to work on this assigned task and your muscle mass grows. Plus, executing an isometric exercise routine on a regular basis works to strengthen the mind-body connection. This, in turn, enables a more efficient recruitment of muscles when needed.¹

When you want to lose weight, it's important to build muscle. Setting time aside daily to do a short isometric exercise routine just makes sense.

¹ Oranchuk DJ, Storey AG, Nelson AR, Cronin JB. Isometric training and long-term adaptations: Effects of muscle length, intensity, and intent: A systematic review. *Scand J Med Sci Sports*. 2019 Apr;29(4):484-503. doi: 10.1111/sms.13375. Epub 2019 Jan 13. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30580468/> on 2022/04/02

The larger your muscles become, the more calories you burn while going about your normal daily routines. Plus, doing an isometric exercise routine takes less time than a regular weight training program, which many of my clients find appealing!

The benefits of embracing an isometric exercise program...

There are many benefits to adding isometric exercises to your daily routine. This is especially true for my clients that are just beginning to exercise on a regular basis but for those who are more experienced there will also be some worthwhile rewards.

- No extra equipment is needed to perform isometric exercises.
- Can be done at home or even at work
- Isometrics can be performed in less time than other types of exercise (an average of 7 seconds per muscle group is all that is required).
- They are easy to learn and perform.
- Enhanced mind-body connection.
- They can be practiced by people who have an injury or have restricted movement (with their doctor's approval, of course!)
- There's far less risk of injury than with other forms of exercise.
- They can help to maintain, strengthen and stabilize joints.
- Isometric training can lower both SBP (systolic blood pressure) and DBP (diastolic blood pressure) and mean arterial blood pressure,² with SBP having the largest reductions.³
- Can reduce experience of pain in older adults (age 65+).⁴
- Can help relieve lower back pain⁵ and neck pain.⁶
- Promotes function and reduces pain by strengthening joints for those with knee osteoarthritis.⁷

2 Smart NA, Way D, Carlson D, Millar P, McGowan C, Swaine I, Baross A, Howden R, Ritti-Dias R, Wiles J, Cornelissen V, Gordon B, Taylor R, Bleile B. Effects of isometric resistance training on resting blood pressure: individual participant data meta-analysis. *J Hypertens*. 2019 Oct;37(10):1927-1938. doi: 10.1097/HJH.0000000000002105. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30889048/> on 2022/03/29

3 Cornelissen VA, Smart NA. Exercise training for blood pressure: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Am Heart Assoc*. 2013 Feb 1;2(1):e004473. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.112.004473. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23525435/> on 2022/03/29

4 Lemley, Kathy J, Drewek, Breanna, Hunter, Sandra K, Hoeger Bement, Marie K. Pain Relief after Isometric Exercise Is Not Task-Dependent in Older Men and Women. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*: January 2014 - Volume 46 - Issue 1 - p 185-191 doi: 10.1249/MSS.0b013e3182a05de8. Retrieved from: Pain Relief after Isometric Exercise Is Not Task-Dependent i... : Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise (lww.com) on 2022/03/29

5 Rhyu, Hyun-Seung et al. "The effects of isometric exercise types on pain and muscle activity in patients with low back pain." *Journal of exercise rehabilitation* vol. 11,4 211-4. 30 Aug. 2015, doi:10.12965/jer.150224. Retrieved from The effects of isometric exercise types on pain and muscle activity in patients with low back pain - PMC (nih.gov) on 2022/03/29

6 Alpayci M, İlter S. Isometric Exercise for the Cervical Extensors Can Help Restore Physiological Lordosis and Reduce Neck Pain: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Am J Phys Med Rehabil*. 2017 Sep;96(9):621-626. doi: 10.1097/PHM.0000000000000698. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28118272/> on 2022/03/29.

7 Anwer, S., & Alghadir, A. (2014). Effect of isometric quadriceps exercise on muscle strength, pain, and function in patients with knee osteoarthritis: a randomized controlled study. *Journal of physical therapy science*, 26(5), 745-748. <https://doi.org/10.1589/jpts.26.745>. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4047243/#:~:text=The%20objective%20of%20this%20study,the%20%2Dweek%20training%20program> on 2022/03/29.



Breathe correctly

Many of us tend to have shallow breathing. Breathing more deeply, right down into the belly, helps to boost the metabolism and at the same time can keep us in a more relaxed state while we go about our daily routines. Learning to breathe properly will enhance your general health and energy levels. Take time during the day to focus on how you are breathing and repeat this little exercise often. It won't take long for this to be your natural breathing pattern:

- Place hands just below your rib cage, palms flattened and fingers pointing towards each other (your middle fingers should be touching where they meet in the center, over your tummy)
- Allow your tongue to rest naturally and gently on the roof of your mouth
- Now breathe in through your nose - if your fingertips actually separate as you breathe in, then you are successfully breathing right down into your belly
- If your fingertips remain touching it just means that you are only filling your upper lungs with air (try again, and this time imagine the air moving right down into your belly and you will probably see those fingertips moving apart)
- Exhale slowly and completely
- Now inhale once more, breathing deeply into your belly and once you feel your fingertips pulling apart switch your attention to filling the upper part of your lungs too - you should feel your chest area rising as air fills the upper portion of your lungs as well as moving deeply into your lower lungs
- Repeat a few times always being sure to exhale completely before inhaling again, through your nose



Proper way to breath while performing Isometric exercises...

Now that you have a handle on breathing deeply down into the belly, let's look at good breathing technique while doing isometric exercises. You might find yourself straining and even holding your breath as you learn to do Isometrics, but I want to emphasize how important it is to breathe normally. Holding your breath for long periods of time while exercising can cause your blood pressure to rise which could pose a danger.

On the other hand, your body takes in oxygen when you breathe properly which will enhance your performance as well as the resulting benefits of these exercises. Here's how to breathe while doing an isometric exercise:

- Relax facial muscles and allow your tongue to rest gently on the roof of your mouth
- Inhale through your nose deeply (filling both the lower and upper part of the lungs) for five seconds
- Exhale through your mouth completely for 5 seconds
- Repeat for the duration of the exercise

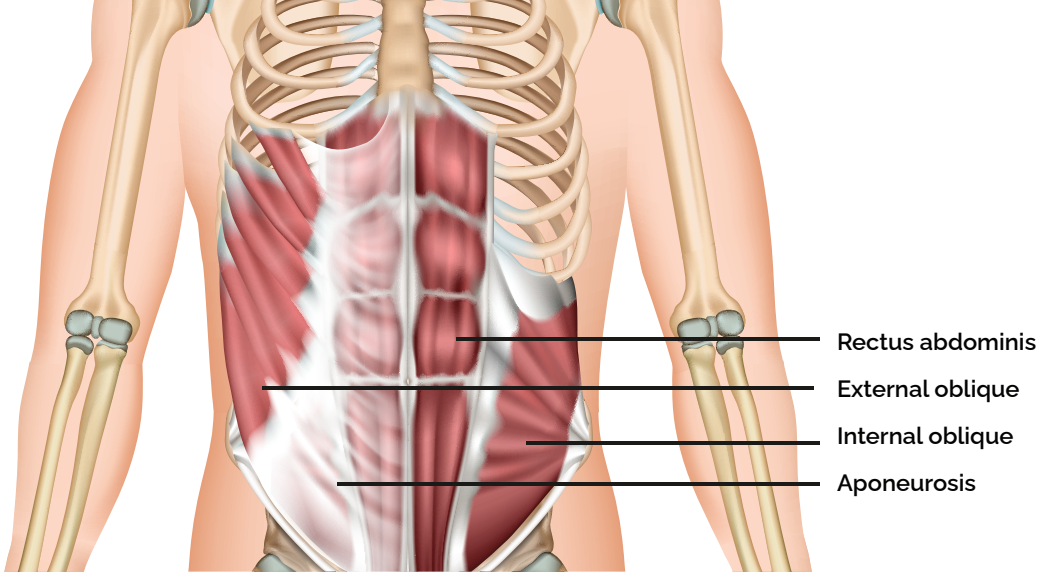
Maximal voluntary contraction

Maximal voluntary contraction is just a fancy way of saying, "squeeze as hard as you can". When performing isometric exercises you are fatiguing your muscles and the way you are doing this is by tightening them up and holding the tension. It doesn't take long to fatigue the muscle but you have to give it everything you've got!

I recommend that my clients who are more experienced with exercise programs squeeze and tighten their muscles from 90-100%, basically squeeze as hard as you can.

If you are new to exercise then tighten your muscles less, about to 60-70%. I know this is somewhat subjective but you can figure this out by tightening as hard as you can and then slacking off just a bit until you can feel the tension but aren't exhausting your muscles too quickly.

As you repeat these routines and build stronger muscles you will have to adjust "the squeeze" as you go.



Maintaining proper form

Study the images posted with each of the listed isometric exercises and memorize the written instructions as you learn to position your body. Maintaining proper form is how you accurately target a muscle group and allows you to contract these muscles so that your joints do not move.

What are “core” muscles?

There are different versions of which muscle groupings actually comprise what is commonly referred to as the “core” muscles. The isometric exercise routines I outline here, refers to following group of “core” muscles:

- *External & internal obliques:* The external oblique muscle extends from the lower half of the ribs around and down to the pelvis on each side of the body. The external oblique muscles cover the sides of the abdominal area. They are large muscles, sitting on the top surface of the abdomen just beneath the fat and skin layers. The internal obliques are located beneath the external obliques. The external oblique is an opposite side rotation muscle, while the internal oblique is a same side rotation muscle. They work together to rotate your body when required. The right external oblique and left internal oblique rotate the spine to the left. The left external oblique and right internal oblique rotate the spine to the right.
- *Rectus abdominis:* This is the muscle we call the “abs” and is also referred to as the “six pack”. It is a long muscle on the front of the body, extending from the rib cage down to the pelvis.
- *Transverse abdominis:* This muscle is the deepest layer of abdominal muscle which sits below the internal and external obliques and rectus abdominis. It spans from lower ribs down to the pubic bone on the front of the body.
- *Quadratus lumborum:* These paired muscles are located in the lower back on either side of the lumbar spine (lowest portion of the spine). The muscle is flat and rectilinear in shape and attaches the lower ribcage to the lumbar spine. Because these muscles are contracted over long periods of time when sitting, these muscles are often the source of lower back pain for those seated at a computer all day.
- *Spinal rectors:* This group of muscles lies on each side of the vertebrae. They extend alongside the lumbar, thoracic, and cervical sections of the spine. These muscles work to straighten the back and allow for side-to-side rotation.



Stability and strength in the core muscle grouping is so important I am including an isometric exercise routine dedicated to this group exclusively: [Isometric Routine: Strengthen Your Core.](#)

Your core muscles work to protect, stabilize and keep your spine mobile during all of your day's activities. From automatic activities such as inhaling and exhaling to others such as walking, standing, sitting, pushing, pulling and lifting; your core muscles are engaged and working for your benefit. They are literally “the core” of the movements your body does throughout the day.

What is abdominal bracing?

The term, abdominal bracing describes an isometric contraction of the muscles in your abdominal wall. This contraction does not move or change the position of the pelvis, the ribcage or the spine. When these muscles are engaged they stiffen and this stiffening protects the spine. If any of these muscles are weak you are at risk for injury when performing daily tasks such as lifting, pulling and pushing. Even standing and sitting can become problematic.

Abdominal bracing is a technique that can be learned which allows you to consciously engage these important core muscles to brace your spine when you are performing isometric exercises or when you are simply engaged in daily tasks. The amount of air inhaled when preparing to brace will depend on the activity in which you are about to engage.⁸

- Breathe in deeply down into your belly and expand your ribcage as you inhale through your nose. You can do this while standing or lying down.
- Tighten all the core muscles. To do this imagine you are about to be punched in the gut and you want to make your belly as hard as possible to lessen the impact of the imagined punch. You can also imagine your torso is like a tree trunk made up of concentric circles and you are squeezing these circles inward.

⁸ Author: Sarah Lindberg. Reviewed by Gregory Minnis, CPT: Article title: Abdominal Bracing Exercises to Take the Strain Off Your Back. Retrieved from Abdominal Bracing Benefits & Tips on How to Do It (healthline.com) on 2022/04/04.



Practice abdominal bracing regularly until you get the hang of it and then make sure to use this technique as you move through your active day. You do not need to tighten to the maximum for all activities. Leaning over to pick up a lighter bag of groceries requires less tension than say, lifting a heavy chair. Your body will automatically adjust the amount of tension in the core muscles when they are activated for low impact movements such as inhaling and exhaling.

Abdominal hollowing

This isometric technique describes a slightly different approach to stabilizing the spine. It is easy to perform and occurs when you simply focus on pulling your belly button inwards, towards your spine. This type of core muscle contraction activates deep spinal stabilizers and the transverse abdominis. Abdominal hollowing works best when you perform the technique while inhaling.

It is easy to practice this technique wherever you are; lying down on the couch or in bed, sitting on the bus or at your desk, standing in line at the grocery store... well you get the idea. Practice makes perfect! Use the technique the same as would use “abdominal bracing” as you engage in various activities throughout your day.



Chapter II: Isometric Exercise Routines

“No pain, no gain”????

The old adage, “no pain, no gain” does not hold true for isometric exercise routines. In fact the direct opposite is true. If you feel pain during any of the movements outlined below, stop the exercise immediately. The usual advice I give my clients is to always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise regime. If you get the “good to go” thumbs up from your health care practitioner; then great! But you must also be vigilant about getting into the correct positioning while doing each of the exercises and stop immediately if you feel any pain at all.

This doesn't mean that a bit of muscle tenderness in a muscle group after a work-out is bad. Remember; the way isometric exercises work to build muscles is to stress the targeted muscles by placing tension on them until they fatigue. Your body goes to work on building more muscle fibers in response to this stress. So, some soreness afterwards is to be expected.

Not every exercise should be done by everyone. If you know you have a current or previous injury then you need to be aware of this when embarking on a new exercise regime. For example: if you have torn your rotator cuff at some point then go easy on your shoulders.

Take a day off between routines ...

Resting muscles between exercise sessions is important. This gives fatigued muscles a chance to heal and also gives your body time to add new muscle fiber to those stressed muscles so they will be stronger next time you need them. Give your body time to do its thing. I counsel my clients to enjoy walking every day so put your energy into a good brisk walk that gets your heart pumping on these in-between days!

The Chair Suite

I call the last two routines which are listed in Chapter III, The Chair Suite. They are both for those that need to start out slowly because they haven't exercised in a long time and their muscles and joints have become less mobile. This grouping of exercises is designed to begin the process of stretching and strengthening neglected areas of the body while providing extra support. As the name implies, they are performed using a chair for support. The majority are done while seated and a few can be done standing with the back or seat of the chair being used to provide extra stability.

Others that can benefit could also be dealing with chronic medical issue like degenerative arthritis which has led to deterioration of joints and the accompanying stiffening that occurs. Exercising with chair support may be a way to regain some mobility in the affected joints and surrounding muscles which could improve balance, strength and flexibility.

If you are in this group or are dealing with other similar challenges it is especially important to talk to your doctor and/or physiotherapist to get advice on which exercises would be of benefit and which ones you should avoid.

A few things before we start ...

Everyone else can start by doing Strengthen Your Core followed by the full body routines, #1, #2 and #3. Take a day off between each and then start over again.

The selected isometric exercises can all be done at home with no fancy equipment (except a few soup cans) being necessary. However, I do recommend having a firm carpet or exercise mat for the floor exercises. Other than this, a positive attitude and your body weight is all you need!

Give your body the fuel it needs with good nutrition and sleep an adequate amount of time nightly (7-8 hours). Begin slowly, focusing on form as well as time under tension and ... *listen to your body*.

I also tell my clients who are embarking on an exercise program for the first time that it is best to consult with a physiotherapist or professional trainer for one or two sessions while learning isometric routines. Correct body position is important for good results and will prevent injury. Having the benefit of a seasoned pair of eyes and professional feedback as you learn the routines will ensure you get off to a good start.

Forearm Plank



Variation



Isometric Routine: Strengthen Your Core

1. Forearm Plank

Muscles targeted: transverse abdominis, the rectus abdominis, and the internal and external obliques

Lay on the floor, face down with your arms bent and forearms placed beneath your chest as you rise up on your toes. Check to make sure your spine is in a straight line, parallel to the floor; you don't want to have your bottom raised or your hips sagging.

While keeping spine in a straight line, tighten abs as much as you can. Engage your core muscles (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing). Remember to breathe evenly and deeply while performing this exercise.

Hold this position for 10-60 seconds (depending on your fitness level) or until the engaged muscles are fatigued.

** For a more advanced challenge, perform the side plank with your bottom arm straight.*

Side Plank



Variations



2. Side Plank

Muscles targeted: transverse abdominis, rectus abdominis, obliques, quadratus lumborum, gluteus medius and gluteus minimus (in the hips), and the adductor muscles (located in the inner thigh)

Lay down on your right side with your legs straight and feet stacked on top of each other. Place your right elbow under your right shoulder with your forearm pointing away from your body. Make a fist. Your baby finger should be contacting the floor mat.

Relax your neck muscles as much as possible while you exhale and engage your core. (By abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing). Lift your hips off the mat so that you are supporting your weight on your elbow and the side of your right foot.

Your body should form a straight line from your ankles to your head. Hold this position for 10-60 seconds, or until the engaged muscles are fatigued. The length of time you hold will depend on your fitness level. Remember to continue breathing throughout the holding time.

Repeat on your left side.

Hollow Body Hold



3. Hollow Body Hold

Muscles targeted: Transverse abdominis, rectus abdominis, obliques, quads, hip flexors, inner thighs, and erector spinae

**This exercise is best for intermediate or advanced levels. A modified version follows this description for those new to isometric exercises.*

Lay down on your back, on top of an exercise mat or rug with your legs straight out and arms by your sides. Engage your abs by pressing the small of your back down into the mat, ensuring the small curved space flattens out and your lower back is touching the mat.

Raise both legs about 3 ½” off the floor while keeping your abs tightened and lower back touching the floor. Now position your arms behind your head and raise both arms and head about 1-2” from the mat.

Hold this position for 10-30 seconds, or until the engaged muscles are fatigued. The length of time you choose to hold will depend on your fitness level.

Modified version for beginners: Instead of reaching behind with your arms, point them both directly upwards towards the ceiling before raising your head 1-2” off the mat. Changing the arm position will reduce the tension in your core.

You can further reduce the tension (if necessary) by bending your knees and pulling them both towards your chest. This will take even more pressure off the abdominal muscles and will keep the lower back pressed into the mat.

*** please note if you have lower back pain, neck pain, shoulder pain, or limitations that make it difficult to lay on the floor this exercise may be counter-indicated. If you are new to this exercise try the modified version first. You can work your way up to the full movement. And if you feel any pain during the movement, stop the exercise. The usual advice I give my clients is to always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise regime.*

Bilateral Lying Leg Raise Hold



4. Bilateral Lying Leg Raise Hold

Muscles targeted: oblique muscles, rectus abdominis

Lie on your back (on top of an exercise mat) with your legs flat and straight, in a horizontal position. Put your hands just below your buttock to provide support for your pelvis. Engage your core muscles (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing).

Raise your legs toward the ceiling until they are in the vertical position (or until your hips are fully flexed). Hold, while squeezing your abs for 10 to 15 seconds and remembering to breathe. Return your leg to the starting position.

Dead Bug Hold



5. Dead Bug Hold

Muscles targeted: primarily transverse abdominis as well as upper and lower abs and obliques

Lie on your back on an exercise mat. Bend your knees then lift your legs, with knees bent, so that your shins are parallel to the floor.

Lift your arms and bend them directly in front of your face. Engage your core muscles (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing).

Crunch up into a slightly crouched position (lift your shoulders off of the floor mat as well as your tailbone). Remember to breathe while holding the position for 10 – 20 seconds or until the engaged muscles are fatigued. Release slowly and repeat. The amount of time you hold in this position will depend on your fitness level.

Bird-dog Isometric Hold



6. Bird-dog Isometric Hold

Muscles targeted: primarily the erector spinae as well as the rectus abdominis and the obliques

**A modified version follows this description for those new to isometric exercises.*

Kneel on an exercise mat with your knees hip-width apart. Place hands firmly on the ground, about shoulder-width apart. Engage your ab muscles (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing).

Point your right arm out straight in front and extend the left leg behind you, forming a straight line from finger tips to the extended foot. Keep your hips squared to the ground. If your low back begins to sag, lower your extended leg slightly. Lift your leg only as high as you can while keeping your back straight. Hold position for 10-20 seconds or until the engaged muscles are fatigued. Remember to breathe while holding.

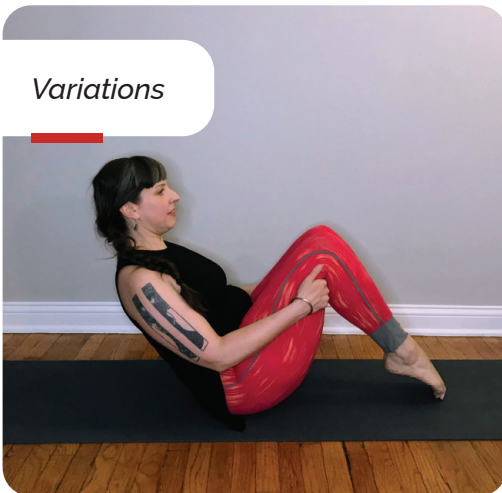
Return to your original position on hands and knees but keep your abs engaged. Switch to use the other limbs (left arm and right leg) and repeat.

***If you have trouble staying balanced while doing this exercise, begin by extending only your leg and leave both hands on the mat. Engage your ab muscles and follow the instructions. When able to do this while staying balanced, progress to extending an arm as well as the opposite leg as described above.*

V-hold



Variations



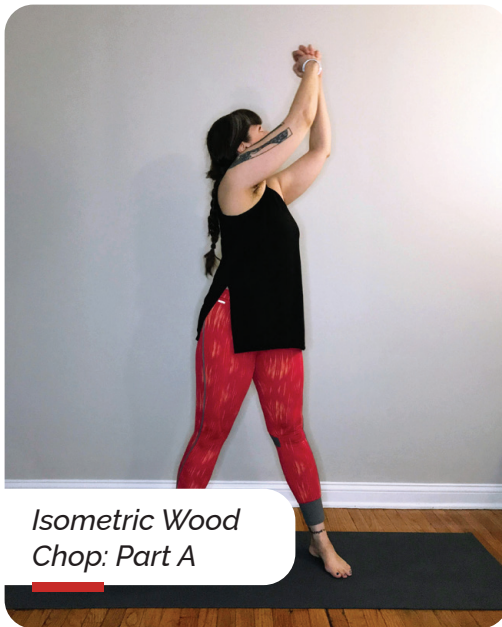
7. V-hold

Muscle targeted: abdominals and hip flexors

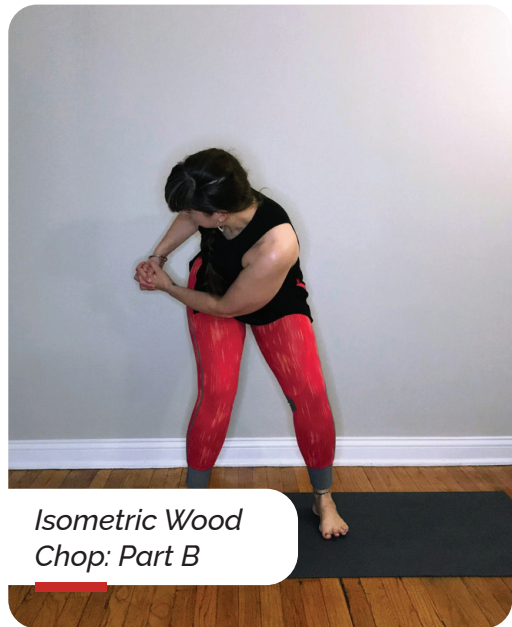
Sit on your bottom with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Engage your core muscles (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing).

Straighten your legs by lifting them up and taking your feet off the floor, creating a “V” shape with your body and legs. To make the exercise easier you can keep your arms by your side. If you want to make it more challenging, reach your arms upwards, straight overhead. Hold for 15 seconds or until your engaged muscles are fatigued and you can no longer hold the proper form (back straight, and no rounding of shoulders). Continue breathing throughout the exercise. Relax for a few seconds then repeat.

**If maintaining a “legs straight” position makes it too hard to keep your spine long or it makes your hip flexors work overtime, bend your knees slightly. This will lengthen your back and engage the abdominals more.*



Isometric Wood Chop: Part A



Isometric Wood Chop: Part B

8. Isometric Wood Chop

Muscles targeted: primarily obliques and transverse abdominis

This exercise is often done using a free weight such as a dumbbell. You can also use a regular sized soup can when performing the wood chop at home. Some people choose to fill a quart sized milk jug with water but this would obviously be heavier and more appropriate for someone at a more advanced level. I advise my clients to practice the movements without any weight at all while learning the correct positioning. When you feel ready to add weight then start with a soup can. As usual, if you feel pain then stop and consult a physician.

There are two parts to this isometric exercise; the “lift” and the “chop”.

Hold the weight (if using) at the outside of your right hip. Lift and rotate the weight up above the left side of your head. Pivot your right foot to help the rotation as you are lifting upwards across your body towards the left side of your head. You will find your trunk will move only slightly.

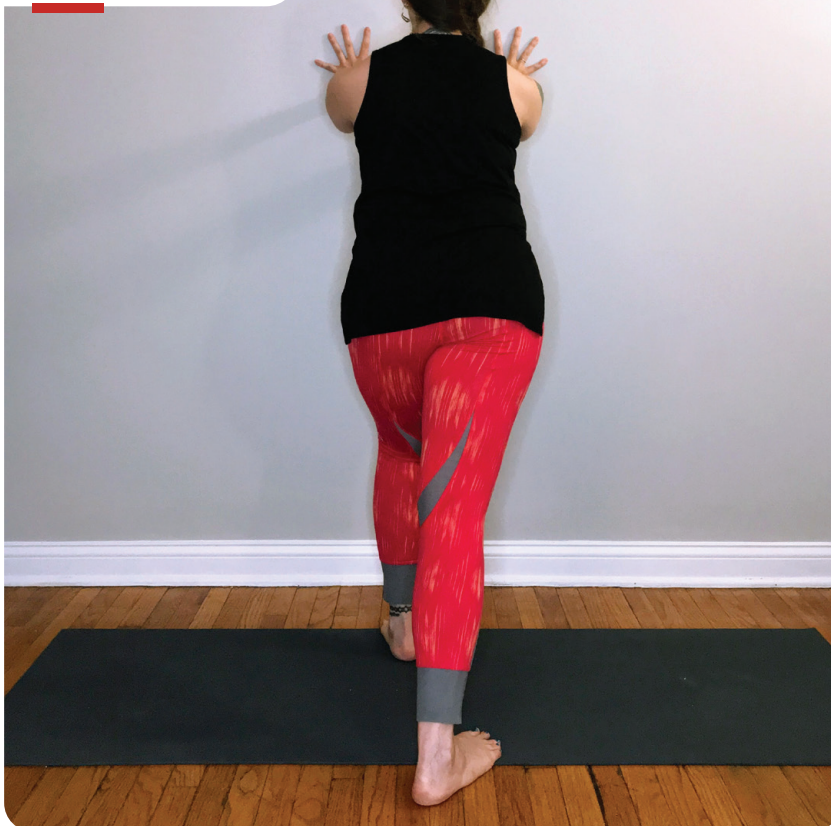
Now it's time for the “chop”. The weight is now moved from its high position at the left side of your head back down to the right hip. This time your left foot will pivot as you rotate slightly in the opposite direction. This is not supposed to be a swift movement. Keep it controlled while executing both the lift and the chop.

Remember to breathe while doing both the lift and the chop. Repeat 4-8 times or until the targeted muscles feel fatigued, pausing between each rep.

Switch to the other side beginning the sequence by holding the weight at the outside of your left hip.

**If you experience any discomfort slow down your speed and reduce your range of motion and if discomfort persists, stop and consult your physician.*

Bent Over Press Against Wall



Isometric Routine 1

1. Bent Over Press Against Wall

Muscles targeted: shoulders or chest

Stand about 12” from the wall. Bend right knee while stretching your left leg out behind you, with left foot heel flat on the ground. Extend your arms out straight in front (at chest level) and place your flattened palms on the wall, fingers pointing upward. Breathe evenly and deeply as you push into the wall as hard as you can.

Hold for 7-10 seconds or until targeted muscles become fatigued Repeat 2 or 3 times resting for 35-60 seconds between reps.

Switch to the opposite side and repeat the whole exercise remembering to breathe.

**If you place your hands slightly farther down as you lean into the wall while pushing, this exercise will target your shoulders. If you adopt a more upright position, by placing your palms slightly higher, your chest will be targeted.*

Prayer Posture



2. Prayer Posture

Area targeted: pectoral muscles

Place palms together in front of your chest in the posture of prayer. Tighten your chest muscles then press your hands together as hard as you can and hold this position for as long as you can.

Keep your shoulders level and relax your neck muscles. Remember to breath down into your belly inhaling to a count of five (5 seconds) and exhaling to a count of 5.

Hold for seconds 10-20 seconds or until the targeted muscles become fatigued.

Repeat 3-4 times resting between reps.

High Plank Hold



3. High Plank Hold

Muscles targeted: abdominals, quadriceps, glutes, and muscles of the arms, chest, and shoulders

Lay flat on the floor, face down. Get into a position as if you are about to do a push-up, with your palms flat on the floor at shoulder level. Check to make sure your spine is in a straight line, parallel to the floor. Press the floor away from you, broadening across your chest as you do so. Engage your core (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing).

Again, check to make sure your spine is straight; you don't want to have your bottom raised or your hips sagging.

Hold for 20-60 seconds or less if muscles become fatigued. Remember to breathe while holding.

Repeat twice resting for a few seconds between reps.

Arm self-wrestle



4. Arm Self-wrestle

Muscles targeted: biceps, triceps

Bend your right arm at a 90-degree angle. Make a fist with your right hand and grab it with your left hand. Push them together as hard as you can. Your right biceps will work to prevent your arm from dropping by pushing upwards as it works against your left triceps which is trying to push your right arm down. Remember to breathe. The muscles will work evenly against each other so the involved joints stay stationary and not moving.

Hold for 7-10 seconds or less if targeted muscles become fatigued.

Rest for a few seconds and then repeat on the other side

**Relax the shoulders and other upper body muscles that are not directly involved when doing this exercise.*

Tricep Extension



5. Triceps Extension (Against Wall)

Muscles targeted: triceps

Stand about 12" from the wall. Bend right knee while stretching your left leg out behind you, with left foot heel flat on the ground. Make your hands into fists and place them on the wall at head level. Cushion fist with folded towel if necessary. Breathe evenly and deeply as you push into the wall as hard as you can by activating your triceps. Hold position for 7-10 seconds, or until muscles are fatigued.

Repeat with left knee bent and right leg stretched out behind.

Keep your shoulders relaxed and unengaged while performing this exercise.

Low Squat



6. Low Squat

Muscles targeted: quadriceps, glutes, and hamstrings

Stand so that your feet are shoulder-width apart. Now pretend you are about to sit down but pause part way through the motion. In this squat position, your thighs should be parallel to the floor. Make sure your knees are not going past your toes as you squat.

Even though your feet won't move, tighten your muscles as if squeezing your feet together. This type of tension will cause your inner thigh muscles to contract even more. Remember to breathe as you perform the exercise. Hold for 10-30 seconds or less if targeted muscles become fatigued.

Return to starting position. Repeat 3-5 times.

**A common posture error with this exercise is not sitting back far enough. The fix for this is to prevent your knees from going over your toes.*

Batwing Hold



Back



7. Batwing Hold

Muscles targeted: rhomboids, core

This version of the batwing is deceptively simple but targets the often neglected rhomboids. Practicing this will help you avoid the neck stuck out, upper back rounded look we associate with aging; correct your posture and look younger!

Stand with feet slightly apart and hands clasped behind your head. Engage your core (by bracing or hollowing) and squeeze your shoulder blades together. Hold for 8-15 seconds and release, remembering to breathe throughout this holding time. Repeat 4 times or less if targeted muscles become fatigued.

Overhead Hold



Isometric Routine 2

1. Overhead Hold

Muscles targeted: upper trapezius, shoulder girdle muscles, triceps, core muscles

You will need some weights for this one; start by using 2 cans of soup, one in each hand. Lift arms so you are holding the cans above your head, shoulder width apart. Engage your core (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing) as you lift your arms.

Hold in this position for 20-30 seconds or less if targeted muscles become fatigued. Repeat 2-3 times resting a few seconds between reps. Remember to breathe throughout the exercise.

Glute Bridge



2. Glute Bridge

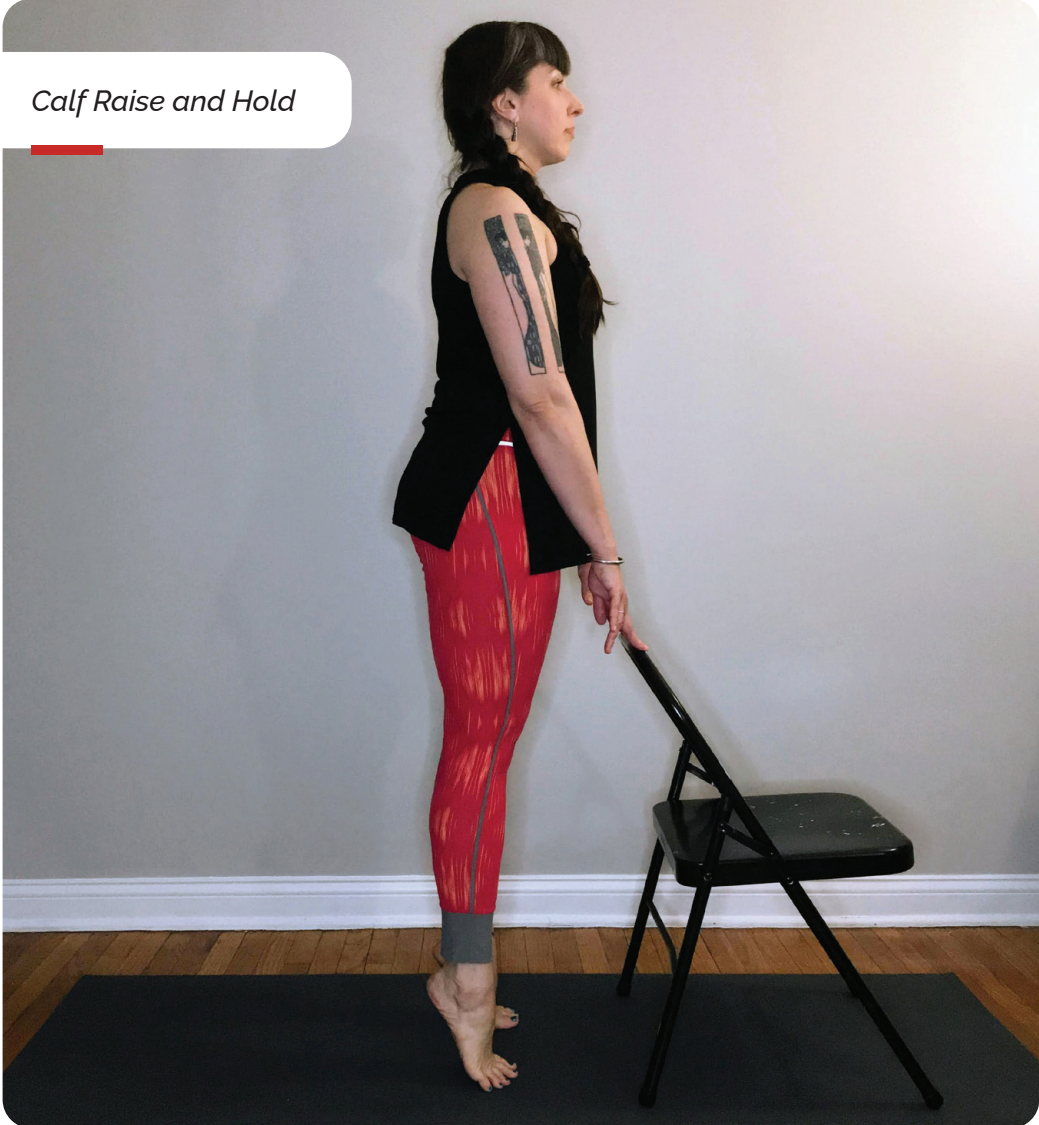
Muscles targeted: hamstrings and glutes, core muscles

Lay down on your back with knees bent and heels about 12”-16” from your bottom with arms at your sides. Press into your heels. Engage your core muscles (by abdominal bracing or abdominal hollowing). Squeeze your glutes (bum muscles). This will push your pelvis upwards. You do not want your ribs to flare outwards while doing this.

Check to make sure your tail-bone is tucked in with your feet flat on the floor and your abdominals are engaged. Hold for 30 seconds. If you lose your form (bum starts to sag) because your glutes and hamstrings become too fatigued then hold for less time and slowly build up to 30 seconds.

Repeat 2 or 3 times resting for a few seconds between reps.

Calf Raise and Hold



3. Calf Raise and Hold

Muscles targeted: calves (gastrocnemius, soleus)

Some folks choose to stand a few feet from the wall while doing this exercise so they can use it for support, if needed.

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Place hands on hips (or lightly against the wall) and push down into the balls of your feet. Lift heels off the ground. Hold for 20-30 seconds (less if engaged muscles become fatigued). Or, add 30 more seconds for a greater challenge.

Repeat 2-3 times, resting for a few seconds between each rep.

**For a more advanced level version, perform exercise first on one foot and then on the other.*

Plantar Fascia Standing Calf Stretch: Part A



Plantar Fascia Standing Calf Stretch: Part B



4. Plantar Fascia Standing Calf Stretch (Against the Wall)

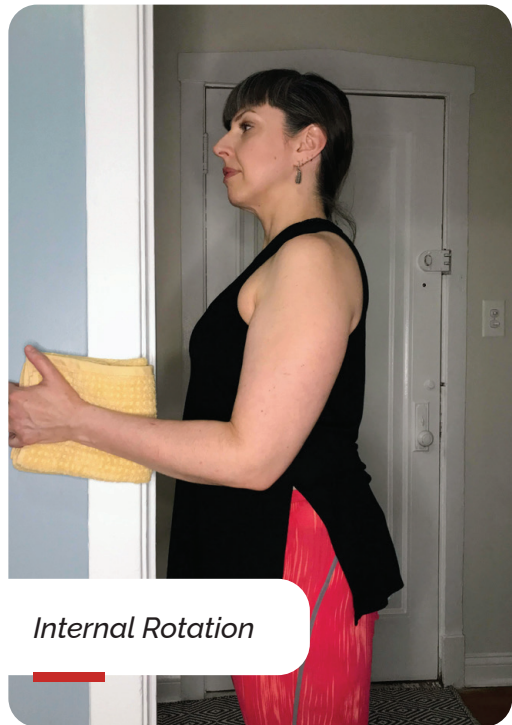
Muscles targeted: gastrocnemius and soleus

Part A: Stand, with feet about 1-1 ½' from the wall. Place hands on the wall, arms shoulder width apart and fingers pointing upwards. Take a step backwards with your right leg, placing heel of right foot flat on the ground. The heels of both feet should stay flat on the ground throughout this stretch. Keep toes (both feet) pointing forward towards the wall.

Lean forward, moving your chest towards the wall while bending your front knee until you can feel the stretch through the back of your calf muscle. Hold for 20 seconds. Rest for a few seconds and then repeat the stretch three times.

Part B: This stretch targets the soleus muscle. It is a deeper muscle located in the lower part of the leg. Keep hands on the wall and move your back leg forward so that it is closer to the wall but not quite as far forward as your other leg (see image for correct positioning). This time bend both knees until you feel the soleus muscle stretching. Hold for 20 seconds, rest then repeat the sequence 3 times, resting for a few seconds between reps.

Repeat Part A and Part B on the other side of the body starting by taking a step back with the left leg.



5. Isometric Shoulder Rotations

Muscles targeted: rotator cuff muscles - supraspinatus, infraspinatus, teres minor, subscapularis

Part A: External Rotation

Stand perpendicular to the wall and about 6" away. Bend your elbow to a 90 degree angle and make a fist. Place a folded towel between your fist and the wall then press the back of your fist into the wall while trying to rotate your arm in an outward direction. Hold for 5-10 seconds or less if muscles become fatigued. Remember to breathe throughout the exercise. Release pressure, rest for a few seconds and repeat 10-15 times. Do fewer repetitions if muscles tire then build up the number of reps over time as these muscles strengthen.

Repeat exercise on opposite side.

Part B: Internal Rotation

Stand facing an outside the wall corner or a door frame. The shoulder being exercised should be near the door corner (see image to position yourself correctly). Flex elbow 90 degrees and make a fist. Place a folded towel between front of fist and the wall then press into the wall while trying to rotate your arm inward, towards your belly.

Hold for 5-10 seconds or less if muscles become fatigued. Remember to breathe throughout the exercise. Release pressure, rest for a few seconds and repeat 10-15 times. Do fewer repetitions if muscles tire then build up the number of reps over time as these muscles strengthen.

Repeat exercise on opposite side.

Isometric Shoulder Extension



6. Isometric Shoulder Extension

Muscles targeted: deltoid, teres major

Stand about 6" away from the wall (back facing towards wall). Allow your arms to hang by your sides so your hands are down close to hips. Make a fist with your right hand and press it into the wall behind your body. Placing a folded towel beneath the fist against the wall will provide cushioning when you press into the wall.

Hold the pressure for 5-10 seconds and then release slowly. Remember to breathe. Repeat 10-15 times or only until the targeted muscles become fatigued.

Repeat on the other side.

Supine Knee Tuck



Isometric Routine 3

1. Supine Knee Tuck

Muscles targeted: abs, core

This exercise works to strengthen abs. Good posture is encouraged because this position helps you learn how to support the pelvis from the front by bracing while standing, sitting and also squatting.

Lay on your back with legs straight out. Lift both feet and pull them up over your chest keeping knees high and your feet close to your buttocks. Focus on keeping the pelvis curled under. Tighten abs so pelvis is lifted slightly up off the floor. Hold for 10-60 seconds or until the engaged muscles become fatigued.

Repeat 2-3 times

**For a more advance position move arms above your head (keeping them on the floor) while performing the exercise. If that is easy for you then try extending one leg out (don't allow leg to touch floor) and then tighten and hold. Repeat on the other side.*

2. Leg Extensions

Muscles targeted: quads

Sit on a chair with your tailbone placed against the back of the chair. Feet should be flat on the floor and hands resting on the chair at your sides.

Extend right leg straight out in front. Tighten thigh muscles and pull toes back towards your chin. Hold for up to 30 seconds or until engaged muscles become fatigued. Repeat with left leg. Do both right and left leg 2 or 3 times.

3. Stationary Lunge

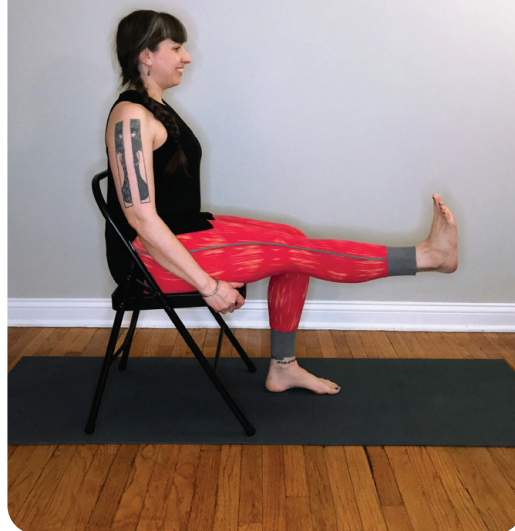
Muscles targeted: glutes, quadriceps, and hamstrings

Stand upright, feet hip-width apart, arms relaxed and hands at your sides. While keeping your chest up and shoulders back engage your core (by bracing or hollowing). Take a step forward with your right foot and lower your body until your upper thigh is parallel with the floor. Your left knee will be bent to a 90 degree angle. Your front leg carries most of your weight while your back leg is providing balance and support as it stabilizes your whole body.

Hold until targeted muscles become fatigued. Repeat on other side with left leg stepping forward. This is one set.

Repeat this set 8-10 times but do fewer repetitions if muscles become too fatigued. Build the number of reps up slowly over time, as the targeted muscles become stronger.

Leg Extensions



Stationary Lunge



Lateral Shoulder Raise



4. Lateral Shoulder Raise

Muscles targeted: deltoid muscles (specifically the lateral or middle deltoid)

To a lesser extent the front & back deltoid, upper trap, rotator cuff muscle and the muscles along your ribs under the arm pit are also engaged during this exercise.

Hold a soup can in each hand and stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and arms at your sides. Knees should be bent just slightly and arms are straight but check to make sure you haven't locked your elbows. Engage your core muscle (by bracing or hollowing) and slowly lift your arms holding them straight out to either side until they reach shoulder level. Your body looks like a letter t when in this position.

Hold for 10-20 seconds, less if targeted muscles feel fatigued. Slowly and in a controlled manner return arms to initial position, rest for a few seconds and repeat 4 or 5 times.

**Hold the cans loosely instead of gripping them hard. This allows the targeted muscles to work harder. Also be careful to keep the weighted hands at shoulder level; too high and muscles other than the deltoid are being targeted and you could end up with some shoulder pain.*

Hand Press



5. Hand Press

Muscles targeted: primarily latissimus dorsi and also braces upper back muscles and the core muscles.

Stand with feet slightly apart and place your hands in front of your chest with the top palm positioned on top of the back side of the bottom hand. Press hands together (top hand should be pressing downwards while the bottom hand is pressing upwards). Keep shoulders relaxed. Do not let them tighten and rise up towards your ears.

Hold for 10-20 seconds or until the targeted muscles become fatigued.

Repeat 3-4 times resting between reps.

Superman (or Superwoman)



6. Superman (or Superwoman)

Muscles targeted: lower back, glutes, hamstrings, and abs

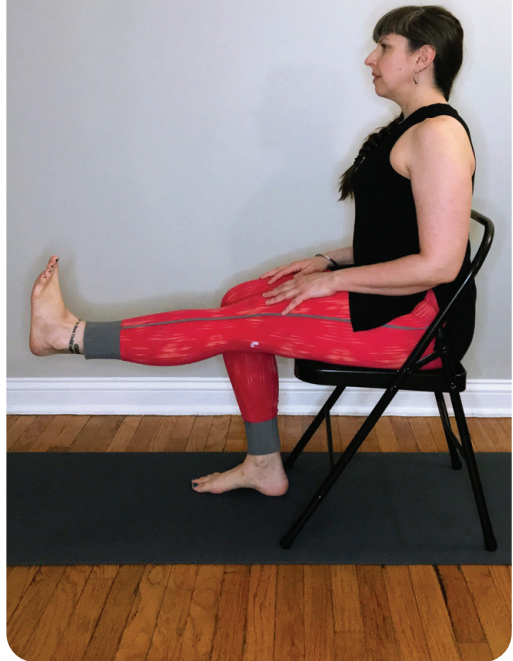
Lie on your mat face down with legs straight and arms extended out front. Keep your head in a neutral position, being sure not to look upwards. Lift arms and legs about 6 inches off the floor or until you feel your lower back muscles contracting. . Engage glutes, core muscles and the muscles between your shoulder blades all at the same time. This is the pose of superman (or superwoman) flying through the air!

Hold for 2-3 seconds making sure to breathe while holding. Relax as you lower arms, legs and belly back onto the mat. Rest for a few seconds and repeat 8 -12 times or less if targeted muscles become fatigued. Build up the number of reps that you choose to do as muscles become stronger.

Simple Plantar Flexion and Dorsiflexion: Part A



Simple Plantar Flexion and Dorsiflexion: Part B



7. Simple Plantar Flexion and Dorsiflexion

Muscles targeted: gastrocnemius, soleus, plantaris, flexor hallucis longus, flexor digitorum longus, tibialis posterior, peroneus longus

This simple isometric exercise targets muscles in your shins, ankles, and feet. Strong muscles in this area are crucial for good balance, stability, and full-body support. You can perform this exercise anywhere you can sit down.

So ... take a seat and lift one leg off the ground. Engage core (by bracing or hollowing). Point your toes straight out in front of you. Hold this movement for five seconds, then point your toes back towards your nose, and hold this movement for five seconds.

Repeat this movement for 10-20 times or as long as you feel comfortable before switching to the other foot and trying out the other side. Repeat on both sides 2 or 3 times

**For a greater challenge lift both legs simultaneously and perform the exercise. Repeat 2 or 3 times resting for a few second in between.*

Chapter III: The Chair Suite

Introduction

These exercise routines are all done either seated in a chair or using a chair for support. Most are executed while in a seated position making them ideal for my clients that have mobility issues or are just beginning to exercise on a regular basis. The first chair routine will help stretch and loosen up neglected joints and muscles before moving on to the second which adds a few more challenges. Remember to use abdominal bracing or hollowing to engage your core while performing the movements described in the following exercises.

Seated Grounding Exercise



Chair Routine 1

1. Seated Grounding Exercise

Muscles targeted: back muscles, front of chest and shoulders

Performing this simple breathing exercise while seated has a calming effect on a busy mind and a tense body. You can perform it just about anywhere and it will help you to feel more grounded on a busy day.

Sit on a chair leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. Lengthen your spine by pushing up through the top of your head and simultaneously downwards through your sitz bones (sometimes referred to as “sits bones” or “sitting bones”) at the bottom of your pelvis. Feel the weight of your body moving down through these bones and into the chair seat.

Place your feet hip-width apart and allow your arms to dangle loosely at either side. Keeping your legs parallel to each other, slowly raise your arms and place your hands on your thighs, palms down.

Now close your eyes and breathe deeply in and out through your nose, while allowing your tongue to gently rest on the roof of your mouth. Take 15-20 deep breaths as described. To end the exercise, slowly open your eyes and release your arms, allowing them to once again hang gently by your sides.

**Some folks have more padding on their bottoms than others so if you find the chair a bit too hard, sit on a thin pillow or folded towel.*

Raised Arm Warm-up



2. Raised Arm Warm-up

Muscles targeted: arms, neck, shoulders and upper back

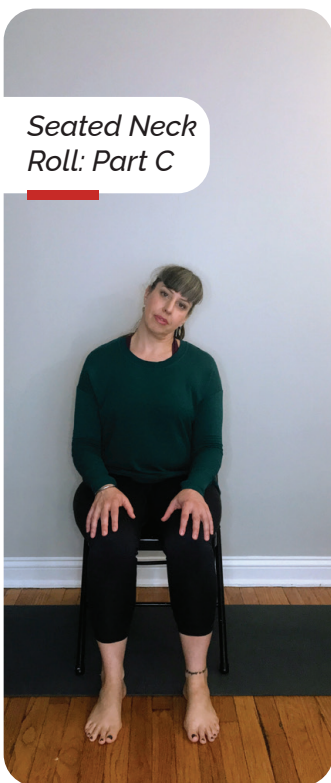
Sit on a chair leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart and allow your arms to dangle loosely at either side.

Engage your core as you breathe in deeply through your nose and raise your arms out to the side and upwards over your head. Your arms should be shoulder width apart with your palms facing towards each other when at the highest point. Lift your gaze up towards your hands while focusing on keeping as much length as possible through the back of your neck.

As you exhale, move your arms outward and back down towards your sides with palms facing towards your body. Bring your gaze back to looking straight ahead as you slowly lower your arms. Repeat the sequence when you are ready to inhale again. Do this routine 4-8 times.

**If shoulder mobility is an issue for you, modify this exercise by raising your arms out towards the side and only lift them to shoulder height.*

***It may be best to skip this exercise if you are recovering from injuries impacting the targeted muscle groups.*



3. Seated Neck Roll

Muscles targeted: neck muscles

If you have stiff neck muscles this exercise will help to loosen them up. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart and allow hands to rest palm side down on your thighs.

Engage your core. Breathe in through your nose while gently dropping your chin down towards your chest. Continue breathing at a natural pace while rolling your neck to the right and then up towards your right shoulder. The breathing pattern should be normal (in and out through the nose) but doesn't have to be coordinated with the neck rolling movements.

When your ear is over your right shoulder switch directions and lift your neck up to its original position, so you are looking straight ahead, then gently let it roll downwards to your left shoulder. Continue the neck roll down towards your chest and then, once again, up towards the right shoulder. Continue this neck rolling pattern for 6-10 complete neck rolls. Now switch direction and repeat routine in the opposite direction 6-10 times.

** Make this neck rolling exercise easier on your neck by modifying the movement so you are simply tilting your head from side to side.*

*** It may be best to skip this exercise if you are recovering from a recent neck injury or your neck mobility is severely impaired.*

*Seated Shoulder
Rolls: Back*



*Seated Shoulder
Rolls: Down*



*Seated Shoulder
Rolls: Forward*



*Seated Shoulder
Rolls: Up*



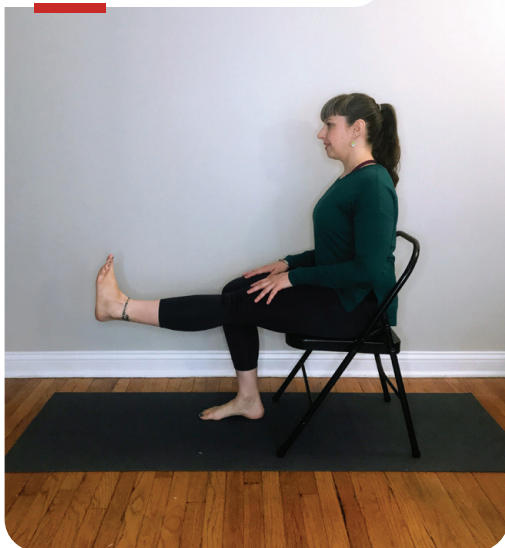
4. Seated Shoulder Rolls

Muscles targeted: neck, shoulders and upper back

This exercise will help to relieve shoulder tightness due to tension from stress and will increase shoulder joint mobility. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart and allow hands to rest palm side down on your thighs.

Breathe in deeply and engage your core as you raise both shoulders up towards your ears. Roll shoulders back, then down and around, towards your front and up towards your ears again, as you complete a slow and gentle exhale, through your nose and begin to inhale again. Continue rolling your shoulders in this manner for 8-10 rounds then switch direction for another 8-10 rotations.

Feet & Ankle Flexibility Exercise: Flex



Feet & Ankle Flexibility Exercise: Point



5. Feet & Ankle Flexibility Exercise (Sitting)

Muscles targeted: ankles, feet and legs

Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart and allow hands to rest, palm sides down on your thighs.

This exercise works to help increase flexibility and mobility in the many small muscles and joints in your feet and ankles. Breathe deeply and naturally, in and out through your nose, while completing the following movements and performing the movements slowly at an even pace with your core engaged.

Begin by straightening your knee to stretch your right leg out in front of your body, but keep your right heel on the ground. Flex your foot by pointing your toes upwards towards your shin then point your toes downward towards the floor. Repeat this action of flexing the foot upwards then pointing the foot downwards 10-15 times. Return to your original seated position with feet flat on the ground.

Switch to your left side and repeating the flex and point routine with your left foot 10-15 times.

**Modify this exercise to make it easier if your mobility in the ankle and foot is limited by keeping both feet flat on the floor (as in the original position) and simply raise your heel up and down.*

*** This exercise can become a bit more challenging if you perform the movements with your foot raised up off the floor 3" or 4", once the leg has been extended.*

**** Skip this exercise if recovering from an ankle or foot injury or if the movements cause any pain.*

6. Sitting Side Bend

Muscles targeted: arms, neck, shoulders and sides of the torso

Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart. Engage your core.

While making sure that your sitz bones (both of them) remain in contact with the seat of the chair, place your left hand on top of your right thigh, palm down. Reach your right hand up and over to the left, while also twisting your torso to the left. Gaze upward while slightly tilting your torso to the left. You will feel a stretch along the right side of your torso when this movement is done correctly.

Study the pictures that accompany this exercise in order to correctly execute the movement. Hold the position while you complete one deep breath, in and out through your nose. Return to the starting position looking straight ahead with back straight and arms hanging loosely at your sides.

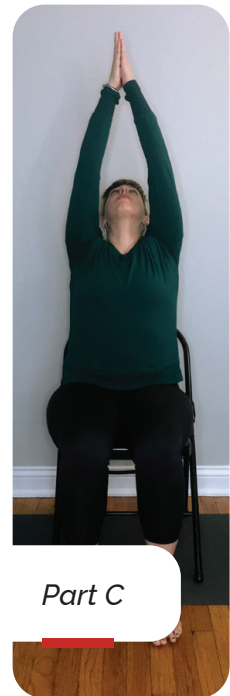
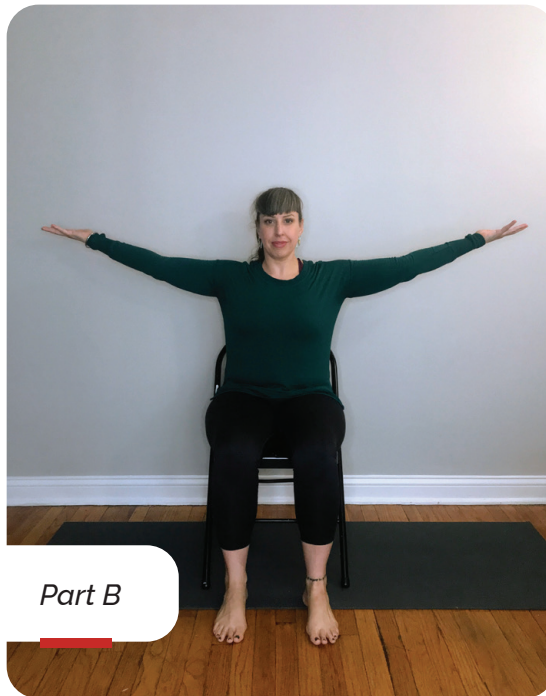
Repeat movement on the opposite side of your body. While making sure that your sitz bones remain in contact with the seat of the chair, place your right hand on top of your left thigh, palm down. Reach your left hand up and over to the right, while also twisting your torso to the right. Gaze upward while slightly tilting your torso to the right. You will feel a stretch along the left side of your torso when this movement is done correctly. Hold the position while you complete one deep breath, in and out through your nose.

**Modify the exercise to make it easier by executing the movement without tilting the body.*

***The exercise becomes more challenging if you choose to reach behind the chair to an area that is reached comfortably, instead of placing your hand on your thigh.*

****Avoid straining muscles and causing pain by being careful to not stretch too forcefully. Respect your body's level of flexibility and you will see improved mobility in these muscles over time. As usual, if you are recovering from an injury in any of the targeted muscles go easy or skip this exercise altogether.*





7. Seated Shoulder Release

Muscles targeted: arms, neck, shoulders and upper back

Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart and allow your arms to hang gently at your sides.

Begin by raising both of your arms out to the side and up above your body ending with palms together above your head. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose and engage your core while raising your arms. Avoid tightening shoulders when lifting arms by keeping them relaxed and as low as possible.

Tilt your head gently back so that you are gazing up towards your hands while keeping your neck as long and straight as possible. Imagine your energy moving up through your arms and hands.

Hold this position for 4-5 breaths. On your last exhale, return body to original position: back straight, arms hanging loosely at sides and eyes looking straight ahead.

**Modify this exercise to accommodate your level of mobility by limiting how high you raise your arms. Position them out in front at shoulder height with palms facing towards each other and gaze straight ahead instead of looking upwards.*

***Make the exercise more challenging by reaching your fingertips higher and very slightly arching your back. This will add to the stretch through your upper back and will work to further open the chest area.*

**** If recovering from an injury to your back, neck or arms you may wish to avoid this exercise.*

Forward Bend on Chair: Part A



Forward Bend on Chair: Part B



8. Forward Bend on Chair

Muscles targeted: back, hips and legs

This exercise will help to alleviate tension that has accumulated in the lower back and hips during a stressful and busy day. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with hands on your thighs, palms down.

Inhale through your nose and engage your core. As you begin to exhale bend forward and drop your torso down (moving slowly) until your tummy area is resting on your thighs. Simultaneously, move your hands off of your thighs and allow them to dangle downwards until they are comfortably resting on the floor, palms against the floor. Relax neck muscles to allow your head to dangle and rest in this position for 3-5 breaths. On your last exhale raise your torso until you are back in your original position, eyes looking straight ahead. At the same time slowly lift your hands until they are once again resting on your thighs, palms down.

**If you want to make this exercise easier to suit your level of mobility bend forward only slightly, placing your hands, palms down, on your knees rather than bending all the way forward so your tummy rests on your thighs.*

***To add a greater challenge, bend your arms so that you are grasping the opposite elbows. This will mean your entire torso is resting on your thighs without the assistance of hands on the floor to distribute some of the weight. You will feel a greater stretch through your hip and back if you opt for this modification.*

****Avoid this exercise if recovering from an injury or if your flexibility and mobility are severely limited.*

9. Seated Body Twist (Easy)

Muscles targeted: back, neck and arms

The joint and muscles along your spine and neck often become stiff and less mobile due to stress, injury or normal wear and tear that comes from normal daily activities as you move through hectic days. The Seated Body Twist is an easy to perform exercise that, over time, will help you gain more flexibility and thus greater mobility.

Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. Place your feet hip-width apart and keep your back straight. Begin by moving your left hand to your right thigh. Place your right arm behind your back, allowing your right hand to rest on the seat of the chair.

Inhale through your nose as you gently lengthen your spine while engaging your core. On the exhale slowly twist your body to the right while moving your head in the same direction so that you are looking as far as possible over your right shoulder. Do not strain too hard. Remain in this position for 8-10 breaths. On your last exhale return to your original position, so that you are once again looking straight ahead with torso untwisted, arms resting at your sides and head aligned with torso and gaze is forward. Rest like this for a minute.

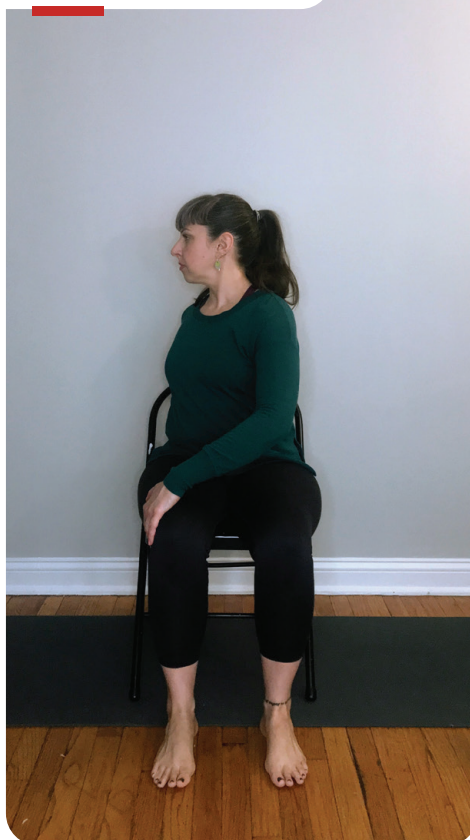
Repeat on the opposite side by placing your right hand on your left thigh and left arm behind your back. Inhale while straightening your spine. When exhaling, twist your body to the left and turn your head so that you are looking over your left shoulder. Hold for 8-10 breaths. On your last exhale, return to the original position.

**To make this easier simply look to the side instead of back and over the shoulder so that your spine isn't twisted more than your level of mobility allows.*

***To add an extra challenge try twisting just a wee bit more (without too much straining) each time you exhale.*

**** Twisting is hard on the body if you are pregnant, are recovering from an injury to your spine or neck, or have limited mobility. Skip the exercise if you have any of these challenges and be gentle when twisting if you are just starting out.*

Seated Body Twist



Neck Stretch



10. Neck Stretch

Muscles targeted: neck and shoulders

My clients with neck and shoulder stiffness (which are both common tension holding areas) find this exercise extremely helpful. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. Place your feet hip-width apart and keep your back straight.

Tilt your head to the right making sure your shoulders remain low and even with each other. Lift your right arm so that you can place your hand gently on top of your head and use that hand to apply a light pressure so your neck feels a stretch along the its left side. Do NOT apply excessive pressure as it's easy to overdo the assisted stretching with too much weight. Just a very light pressure will be enough. Make sure your core is engaged while you hold the position for 8-10 breaths. Slowly return to the original position on the last exhale. Rest for a minute, then repeat on the left side for 8-10 breaths.

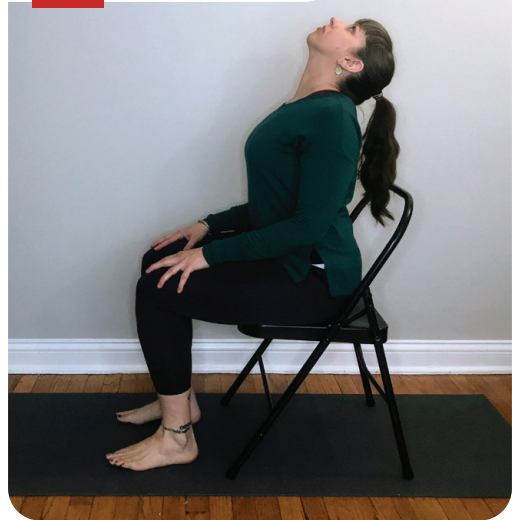
**For an easier version simply tilt your head and don't use your hand for added pressure during the stretch.*

***The neck is a sensitive area of the body so if you feel any pain stop immediately. Also, this exercise is not for anyone currently healing from a neck or shoulder injury.*

Seated Warm-up: Part A



Seated Warm-up: Part B



Chair Routine 2

1. Seated Warm-up

Muscles targeted: back, neck and shoulders

This exercise helps to gain flexibility in the spine and the muscles in the back and neck. Sit on a chair leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. Lengthen your spine by pushing up through the top of your head and simultaneously downwards through your sitz bones (sometimes referred to as “sits bones” or “sitting bones”) at the bottom of your pelvis. Feel the weight of your body moving down through these bones and into the chair seat. Place your feet hip-width apart and allow your arms to dangle loosely at either side.

Inhale deeply as you engage your core. Place your hands on your knees (for support) while you move your chest forward and arch your back *slightly*. At the same time tilt your head *slightly* back and gaze upwards.

On the exhale, continue to use your hands on knees for support as you now curve your back in the opposite direction, leaning forward and curving your upper back up towards the back of the chair. Simultaneously your head goes down so you are now gazing at the chair seat.

Repeat these movements while you take 8-10 more deep and slow breaths.

**Be gentle in your movements if new to exercise.*

***If you do want a bit more of a challenge place your hands on the back side of your thighs and pull gently to increase the stretch.*

**** Avoid this exercise if you are healing from a back or neck injury.*

2. Crossed Leg Side Bend

Muscles targeted: arms, obliques and thighs

This exercise will help to lengthen and stretch both sides of your torso. Your thighs will also receive a gentle stretch. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with arms resting gently at your sides.

Begin by inhaling deeply through the nose as you engage your core and cross your right leg over-top your left. Now place your right hand on the outer side of your left thigh and exhale as you bring your left arm up over your head. You will feel a stretch through the right side of your upper body. Hold this position while taking 8-10 breaths. On the last exhale slowly return to your original position. Rest for a minute and repeat the exercise on the opposite side.

Crossed Leg Side Bend



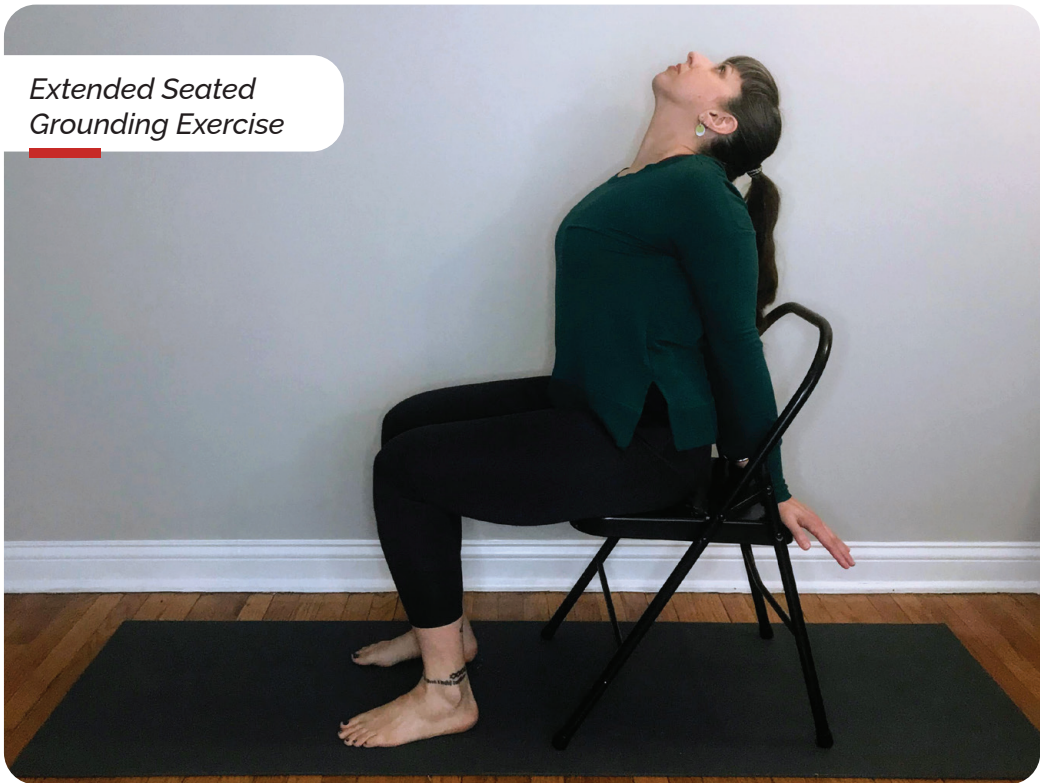
Inhale deeply as you cross left leg over-top your right. Place your left hand on the outer side of your right thigh and exhale as you raise your right arm up over your head. Hold this position while taking 8-10 more breaths. On the last exhale slowly return to your original position.

** It's easy to modify this exercise for those who have less mobility in the targeted muscle groups. Simply do the exercise, as described, without crossing your legs.*

***To add a greater challenge, place your arm behind you on the chair. This will increase the stretch along your side and will work to open the chest a bit more*

**** As usual, skip this exercise if recovering from an injury that affects your back or shoulders.*

Extended Seated Grounding Exercise



3. Extended Seated Grounding Exercise

Muscles targeted: neck, upper back and shoulders

Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with arms resting gently at your sides.

Reach behind with both arms and place your fingertips on the seat of the chair. Take a deep breath in through your nose engaging your core as you look upwards and lift your central chest area upwards towards the ceiling. Simultaneously spread your shoulders reaching them apart to further open the chest.

Now press down through your fingertips and feel the energy move upward through your opened chest. Hold this position for 3-5 full breaths. On your last exhale slowly return to your original position, sitting tall in the chair, hands hanging loosely at your sides and looking forward.

**For an easier version simply leave your hands on your lap and arch your back only slightly.*

***For a more challenging version, grasp the bottom of the chair when you reach your arms around to the back.*

****This movement will be challenging for those recovering from injuries of the back, neck or shoulders so engage cautiously or skip this one altogether. This also applies to those who have limited mobility in the areas being targeted.*

Leg Stretch



4. Leg Stretch

Muscles targeted: hamstrings, hips and lower back

These movements and holds are great for increasing hip mobility and flexibility in the hamstrings. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with arms resting gently at your sides.

Stretch your right leg out in front with your heel on the ground and flex your foot by moving your toes back towards your body. Inhale deeply engaging your core as you lengthen your spine then exhale as you look down towards your leg and bend forward while placing your hands gently on either your right knee or right shin (whichever is easiest for your current level of flexibility). Remain in this position for 3-5 breaths. On your last exhale straighten up and return your right leg to its original position, your arms once again rest gently at your sides and your gaze is forward.

Rest for a minute then repeat on the other side, beginning by taking a deep breath in and stretching your left leg out in front.

**You can make this exercise simpler by one easy alteration. Instead of looking down towards your leg as you bend forward keep your head looking forward so that your gaze remains straight ahead. This will automatically lessen the depth of your bend.*

*** For more of a challenge hang onto your foot when you bend forward or place a strap around your foot and pull on that to deepen the bend.*

****The added challenge is definitely not for folks with decreased mobility in the targeted areas or who are recovering from injuries to the hamstrings, shoulders neck or back. Reaching forward while bending deepens the stretch so easily adds stress to ailing muscles and joints. Be careful and employ caution if you are new to exercise or in recovery from an injury.*

Lower Body Stretch



5. Lower Body Stretch (Pigeon Pose)

Muscles targeted: hamstrings, hips, lower back and thighs.

This exercise can improve flexibility and mobility in the targeted areas and may alleviate pain in the sciatic nerve. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with arms resting gently at your sides.

Place your right ankle over your left thigh so that your right knee is positioned out to the side as you inhale deeply through your nose and engage your core. As you slowly exhale through your nose, place your right hand on the shin of your right leg (just slightly below the knee). Your left hand goes onto your right ankle as you tilt your torso slightly forward, while keeping your spine straight. Hold this position for 3-5 breaths. On your last exhale press into your hands as you straighten back up into your original seated position, with spine straight and gaze forward. Rest for a minute then repeat these movements, on the opposite side of your body.

**To modify this exercise to lessen the stretch through hamstrings and hips simply cross your whole leg over your thigh before tilting forward.*

*** For added challenge instead of bringing your hands to knee and shin bring them down to the ground. This will create a greater stretch through hamstrings and hips.*

**** Skip this exercise if you find it is painful in the knee or hip, if you are in recovery from an injury to any of the targeted areas and also if your mobility is limited in these areas.*

Crossed Leg Twist



6. Crossed Leg Twist (Seated Body Twist)

Muscles targeted: back, hips and legs

This exercise helps increase mobility and flexibility in the back and hips over time. The twisting involved also is a good tension reliever that helps with stiffness. Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with arms resting gently at your sides. Cross your entire right leg over-top your left leg. Your right hand is now moved onto your left thigh while you simultaneously reach around your body to place your left hand behind, on the chair seat.

Inhale through your nose engaging your core while straightening your spine and twisting your torso towards the right as your head turns to look back over your shoulder, as far behind as you are able. Hold for 3-5 breaths. On your last exhale slowly untwist and bring your whole body back to your original position, legs uncrossed and seated on the chair looking straight ahead. Rest for a minute and then repeat the exercise on the opposite side of your body.

**Modify the exercise to make it easier by performing the movements with your legs uncrossed.*

*** Add a challenge by looking slightly farther back each time you exhale (this will automatically increase the twist and will deepen the resulting stretch). Be careful if you opt for this modification, as exercises that involve twisting are not for pregnant women or those recovering from injury in the targeted areas. If experiencing pain, stop immediately.*

Seated Leg Lift



7. Seated Leg Lift (Chair Boat Pose)

Muscles targeted: abdominals, hamstrings, hips and quadriceps

In this exercise you have to use your abdominals to lift both of your legs. The result: you will strengthen not only your abdominals but also your hips and quadriceps! Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with arms resting gently at your sides.

Begin by leaning back in your chair. Inhale deeply as you engage your abdominals to lift your legs (one at a time) about 12” above the ground. Keep both feet flexed while doing this. Exhale through your nose as you place both hands on your thighs. Hold this position for 3 – 5 breaths. On your last exhale slowly lower your legs (one at a time) and return to your original position, seated in the chair, looking forward with arms resting gently at your sides. Repeat 2 more times resting for a minute between each repetition.

**This can be modified for those with less mobility by placing firm yoga blocks beneath your feet (to raise them up off the floor) then simply leaning back in the chair and placing hands on thighs. Holding this pose will place less stress on the targeted areas.*

***For a greater challenge hold your legs straight out in front when you lean back so your body is in a “V” shape. Another variation is to also extend your arms forward when positioned in the “V” shape.*

****This is a challenging exercise and should be skipped by those recovering from injuries of the abdominals, hips or quadriceps or anyone that is challenged with mobility issues.*

Sitting Arm Twist



Modification



8. Sitting Arm Twist (Eagle Wing Pose)

Muscles targeted: arms, upper back and shoulders

Remain seated, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart allowing your arms to rest gently at your sides. Bring both arms up at the sides to shoulder height as you inhale deeply through your nose while engaging your core. Bend arms at the elbows and bring them around so they meet, in front of your body.

Exhale slowly through your nose as you place your right forearm in front of your left forearm and wrap forearms around each other so the palms of your hands meet in front of your face. Check to make sure your upper arms are parallel to your upper thighs.

Hold this position for 6-8 deep breaths. On your last exhale unwind your arms, rest for a minute then repeat on the opposite side for 6-8 breaths.

**Modify the exercise to make it easier by simply placing your hands back to back instead of twisting them around into the palms together position.*

*** To create a greater challenge fold your torso slightly forward by curving your spine.*

****To practice this positioning you need to be flexible so if recovering from injury to any of the targeted areas, give yourself time to heal before taking this one on.*



Sitting Side Bend II

9. Sitting Side Bend II (Chair Warrior II)

Muscles targeted: arms, hamstrings, hips and quadriceps

Practicing this exercise will strengthen leg and arm muscles. I suggest you study the accompanying image to get a good visualization of how your body is positioned on the chair when executing this exercise. It may sound complicated but “a picture is worth a thousand words”!

Begin by sitting up tall on the chair as usual. Slowly shift your body by sweeping your right leg around to the right side of the chair seat. You should end up with your right hamstring (along the back of your thigh) positioned across the seat of the chair and the knee of that leg will now be bent over the side of the chair seat. Stretch your left leg straight out on the opposite side of the chair. Your left foot should be placed flat on the floor and be bent at a 45 degree angle. Inhale through your nose and engage your core as you perform this movement.

As you exhale, lift your arms straight out at the side to shoulder level keeping your palms facing downward. Simultaneously move your head around to the side so you are now looking out directly over your right arm (with your gaze held a few inches above this arm). Hold this position for 3-5 breaths. On your last exhale, slowly drop your arms as you shift on the chair to return to your original sitting tall position. Rest for a minute and then repeat on the opposite side of your body, this time shifting towards the left.

** You can easily modify this exercise to make it easier. From the original position of sitting tall on the chair perform only the arm movements while turning your head to gaze out over your raised arm. Keep both sitz bones in contact with the chair seat.*

***For a greater challenge perform the exercise while standing. You can use the chair back for support and added balance, if necessary.*

****This is a slightly more advanced exercise requiring more strength and flexibility so be cautious and/or skip it altogether if recovering from an injury to any of the targeted areas. You could either do just the arm part or leg part if your injury affects only one area, but be careful.*

10. Reverse Sitting Side Bend (Reverse Chair Warrior)

Muscles targeted: arms, back, hips and legs

Adding this exercise to your routine will help strengthen leg muscles while also providing a good stretch to the sides of your torso. This combination of stretching while simultaneously building strength will provide a feeling of calmness to both the body and the mind. As with the last exercise, I suggest you study the image to get a better understanding of how to position your body before beginning. Start in the usual seated position leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart and allow your arms to hang gently at your sides.



As in the preceding exercise, slowly shift your body by sweeping your right leg around to the right side of the chair seat. You should end up with your right hamstring (along the back of your thigh) positioned across the seat of the chair and the knee bent over the side of the chair seat. Stretch your left leg straight out on the opposite side of the chair. Your left foot should be placed flat on the floor and be bent at a 45 degree angle. Inhale through your nose and engage your core as you perform these movements.

Raise both of your arms straight out at the side to shoulder level keeping your palms facing downward. Simultaneously move your head around to the side so you are now looking out directly over your right arm so that your gaze is held a few inches above your arm. Flip your right palm so that it now is facing upward. Move the arm forward, then up and backwards while also arching your spine backward. If you keep your gaze above the right arm slightly your head will now be tilted back and you will be looking straight up towards the ceiling.

Reach your left arm diagonally downwards, towards your left leg while keeping it straight. Hold this position for 3-5 deep breaths. On your last exhale slowly move your right arm back down and your left arm up. Return to your original sitting tall position and rest for a minute before repeating the exercise on the opposite side.

**Perform only the arm movements to make the exercise easier. Your left hand can hold on to the seat of the chair for support when the left arm is lowered.*

***For a greater challenge perform the exercise while standing. You can use the chair back for support and for added balance, if necessary.*

****Skip this exercise if recovering from back, hip or leg injury. The back bend is deeper and more challenging than other exercises in this list so those with sensitivity in this area should be cautious when choosing to perform the described movements.*

Chair Assisted Downward Dog



11. Chair Assisted Downward Dog

Muscles targeted: arms, back, hips and legs

Stand up straight with feet hip width apart facing the seat of the chair. Bend forward placing both hands, palms down flat, on the seat of the chair, positioning them so you feel stable. Now, step your feet backwards until you can feel that your spine is straight, making sure to engage your core as you breathe in through your nose. See the image provided for the correct position before beginning the exercise. Hold this position for 6-8 deep breaths. Slowly step your feet back towards the chair and then stand up straight to return to your original position.

**For easier positioning place your hands on the back of the chair instead of the seat. This will lessen the bend forward.*

***For a greater challenge bend your elbows and place your forearms on the seat of the chair. This will deepen the forward bend.*

****Avoid this exercise if recovering from a hand, wrist, shoulder, arm, and hip or leg injury. The majority of your weight is supported on your legs during this exercise so if you have trouble standing due to an injury use caution as you proceed or skip the exercise.*

Upward Elbow Grasp



12. Upward Elbow Grasp

Muscles targeted: arms, back and shoulders

This exercise provides a good stretch through the sides and back of your body and also works to improve mobility in the shoulders. Sit up tall in the chair, leaving a small amount of space behind your body so that you are not resting your back against the chair. With back straight, place your feet hip-width apart with arms resting gently at your sides. Slowly raise both arms towards the ceiling then bend them at the elbows. Take hold of the opposite elbows with your hands so that your arms now frame your head. Tilt your head back as you look upward. Hold this position while you inhale deeply while engaging your core. Release your elbows and come back to your original position as you exhale gently. Repeat 2-4 times.

**To modify the exercise in order to make it easier simply perform with both arms straight out to the side at shoulder height instead of bending them at the elbow and clasping opposite elbows. Holding only one elbow at a time will also lessen the stretch across the shoulders but if you try this option be sure to switch to the other side at some point during the exercise to maintain symmetry.*

***You can create a greater challenge by also tilting your torso to the right or left while performing the exercise making sure to alternate sides with each repetition.*

**** It may be best to skip this exercise if in recovery from a neck, back or shoulder injury as the positioning can add stress to the muscles and joints of those targeted areas.*

Effortless Exercise

Dr. Harlan Kilstein has been helping people lose weight since 1979. He opened up two weight loss clinics in South Florida that saw over 300 clients a day.

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- ✔ fear of success
- ✔ family sabotage
- ✔ self sabotage
- ✔ perfectionist syndrome
- ✔ falling off the wagon

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