

# SAFE

## EXERCISE AT HOME





# SAFE EXERCISE AT HOME

This booklet and the Safe Exercise At Home website were developed by Associate Professor Catherine Said, Professor Cathie Sherrington, Professor Keith Hill, Associate Professor Michele Callisaya, Associate Professor Frances Batchelor, Professor Anne-Marie Hill, Mr Rik Dawson, Associate Professor Shylie Mackintosh, Dr Stephanie Fu and Ms Courtney West.

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## INTRODUCTION

Physiotherapists from around Australia developed the safe exercise at home website. These physiotherapists have clinical and academic expertise in exercise and other forms of physical activity for older people and people with walking problems.

<https://www.safeexerciseathome.org.au>

### Exercise information for older people

COVID-19 isolation policies suggest that older people limit contact with others. This may mean that you cannot do your usual physical or social activities. You may also not be getting 'out and about' as much as usual.

Australian guidelines recommend all older people should be active every day. These guidelines recommend activities that promote their fitness, strength, balance and flexibility. Similar recommendations are also useful for people of any age with health conditions or walking problems.

If you were a person who did a lot of exercise before the restrictions of COVID-19, try and do similar exercises now. You may have to do them in a different way. If you did not exercise before the COVID-19 outbreak, now is a good time to start.

Please talk to a health professional before you start an exercise program. This is more important you have existing health, walking or balance problems. Many GPs and physiotherapists now offer telehealth appointments.

This website provides information on ways to stay active at three levels of function and fitness. If you are not sure which level best suits you, start at the easiest level (Level 1) and work your way up.

**The information on the "Safe exercise at home" website and in this booklet are not intended to replace individual health professional care. Please contact your doctor, physiotherapist or exercise professional if you have any concerns or questions about your exercise program.**





## STAY SAFE WHILE YOU EXERCISE

- Have a clear space to exercise. Remove obstacles (eg rugs, cords, furniture) so you don't trip over.
- Exercise in a well-lit area that is not too hot or cold.
- Wear comfortable clothing and well-fitting shoes or runners.
- Drink water before and after exercise.
- Balance exercises must be done safely. Stand so you have a bench, table, or sturdy chair next to you, or in front, that you can hold onto. Have a wall close behind you to steady yourself if needed.
- Start any new exercise, slowly and carefully. If there is a video, watch the video before you try the exercise. If the exercise has an 'easy' and a 'hard' option, try the easy option first.
- It is safer to have someone nearby when you are trying new balance exercises. Remember to respect the social distancing recommendations. Always keep your phone in reach if you live alone.
- Muscle soreness can occur after exercise, especially new exercises. This soreness should go away after a couple of days. Please contact a health professional if pain persists for more than a few days after exercising.
- Listen to your body! Change the exercise if it causes you pain, discomfort or if it makes you feel unsteady or unsafe. You can do an easier version, hold on for balance or leave it out. Seek advice, if you need, from an exercise specialist (physiotherapist/exercise physiologist).
- After a minor illness (eg cold) you might start at a lower level than usual and slowly work back up to where you were.
- If you have a new major illness, went to hospital or are below your usual level of ability, seek advice from your health professional on how to re-start exercises safely.

## TIPS FOR STAYING MOTIVATED

If you used to go out regularly you risk losing fitness, strength and balance when you stay at home more.

If you haven't been active before, it is never too late to start.

Low fitness, strength and balance will make daily activities more difficult.

Simple home exercises and regular walking can improve your ability to do daily activities.

Extra time at home provides a good opportunity to get into good exercise habits.

Some tips to help you keep up with your exercise program include:

- Plan what exercise you will do and at what time each day.
- Choose activities you will enjoy.
- Tell someone about your exercise plans or write them down.
- Try recording exercises done in a diary or calendar.
- Start with small changes.
- Try to increase the number of steps you take each day. You can track your steps with a pedometer, activity monitor, phone app or smart watch.
- Focus on what you have achieved.
- Any increase in activity is good for you; even walking around the house is better than sitting all day.





## How hard should you work?

Aim to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. This can be a single 30 minute session, or several shorter episodes of activity (eg 3 x 10 minute sessions).

Each week, you should also include several types of exercises:

### Fitness (cardiovascular) exercise

- You should feel a little out of breath, but still be able to talk. If you are too out of breath to talk you are working too hard.

### Strength exercise

- If you haven't done an exercise before, start with either no weight or a light weight that you can use comfortably. Focus on doing the exercise correctly before increasing the weight.
- Use a mirror or film yourself with a camera/phone/iPad so you can see yourself as you exercise. This makes sure that you are doing the exercise correctly.
- You should be able to do each exercise 8 – 12 times (called the number of repetitions), then rest, and repeat each set of repetitions another 1-2 times. If you are doing 12 repetitions easily it may be time to increase the weight.

### Balance exercise

- Stay safe! Make sure you have a bench / table / wall close by for support.
- These exercises work your balance, so you should feel a little unsteady, but still in control.
- If you feel you might overbalance, the exercise is too challenging. If so, try an easier version. One way you can make standing balance exercises easier is by increasing the distance between your feet.

Many exercises work both strength and balance together. All the three exercise levels provided on the Safe exercise at home website have strength and balance grouped together.

### **Level 1 – Foundation**

These exercise suit people who:

- Feel unsteady turning or reaching out
- Walk slowly
- Use a walking aid
- Have medical conditions that limit activity
- Get some help with housework and other activities such as shopping

NB: It is important to exercise safely, a physiotherapist can help you decide how to start exercising safely. A little bit of exercise more often may work best. Instead of doing 30 minutes in one session try doing three 10-minute sessions spread throughout the day

### Fitness (cardiovascular exercise)

- Try and be physically active for 5 minutes every hour
- Use the kitchen bench for stability to do exercises such as walking sideways or marching up and down on the spot
- Put some music on for motivation
- Use the television advertisement breaks to exercise

### Strength and balance exercises

- Stand up from your chair 10 times
- Use the kitchen bench for stability and rise up onto your toes
- Do these exercises every hour or so

## Level 2- Moderate

These exercise suit people who:

- have a well-controlled medical condition
- get puffed easily or feel a little unsteady
- can walk down the street
- get minimal help with daily activities

NB: Remember it is important to exercise safely, a physiotherapist can help you decide how to start exercising safely.

### Fitness (cardiovascular exercise)

- Walk a short distance down the street at least once a day (providing current COVID-19 restrictions allow this). Keep 1.5 meters apart from other people and don't touch seats etc. Make sure you wash your hands after returning home
- Try and be physically active for 5 minutes every hour
- Use the kitchen bench for stability to do exercises such as walking sideways or marching up and down on the spot
- Put some music on for motivation
- Use the television advertisement breaks to exercise

### Strength and balance exercises

- Stand up from your chair 10 times every hour or so. See if you can do it without using your arms.
- Use the kitchen bench for stability and rise up onto your toes 10 times

## Level 3 - Advanced

These exercise suit people who:

- Regularly walk (at least 30 minutes in one session)
- Feel steady walking outside
- May attend a gym
- Engage in activities such as gardening

NB: If you have had two or more falls in the past 12 months

it is advisable to start on level 1 or 2. You should consult your Doctor or physiotherapist to help you reduce your risk of falling.

### Fitness (cardiovascular exercise)

- Walk a short distance down the street at least once a day (providing current COVID-19 restrictions allow this). Keep 1.5 meters apart from other people and don't touch seats etc. Make sure you wash your hands after returning home
- If you are unable to go outside, try climbing up and down stairs, putting on some music and walking around the house or marching on the spot (high stepping).

### Strength and balance exercises

- Check if your gym or exercise class has classes available on-line. You can replace weights with tins of food, water bottles or milk bottles filled with sand or water, or elastic/TheraBand's.
- Standing up and down from a chair without using your arms.
- Rising up onto your toes.





## Success Stories

My name is Lesley and I am 83 years old. I live at home with my husband and am the primary carer for him.

I have always been active and kept busy with family activities with my large family. Several years ago I had a flare up of severe back and leg pain that resulted in a couple of weeks in hospital, and limited me to very short distance walking inside with a wheelie frame. At that stage I worked on a home exercise program most days to help with my balance, strength and posture, which gradually helped me to walk without the frame inside, and to get back to some of the activities I enjoyed away from home with the frame.

Over time I stopped the home exercise program, but had also commenced a weekly Pilates class with a physiotherapist which I have continued doing with my husband until the Coronavirus restrictions were put in place. I noticed quickly that without the Pilates program that my standing up and walking seemed to be deteriorating, so I have restarted some of the home exercise program I was previously doing which seems to be helping again.

I do find that the regular exercise, through the Pilates class or the home exercises or both, do help to keep me able to maintain my walking and balance to keep me doing many of the things I enjoy to do especially with family, although within the limits of my ongoing pain and walking problems.

## My story

**Name:**

Age:

### Goals:

**Plan:**

# SAFE EXERCISE AT HOME

## EXERCISE EXAMPLE - LEVEL 1, FOUNDATIONAL

Level 1 exercises are likely to be suitable for you if you:

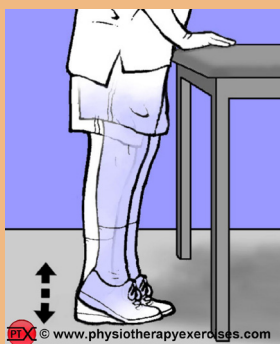
- Feel unsteady turning or reaching out
- Walk slowly
- Use a walking aid
- Have medical conditions that limit activity
- Get assistance with housework and other activities such as shopping.

Some examples of exercises for this level are shown below. Remember it is important to exercise safely. If you need help, a physiotherapist can help.

A little bit of exercise more often may work best – instead of half an hour in one session, you can do three 10 minute sessions spread throughout the day.

**The information on the “Safe exercise at home” website and in this booklet are not intended to replace individual health professional care. Please contact your doctor, physiotherapist or exercise professional if you have any concerns or questions about your exercise program.**

## Bilateral calf raises



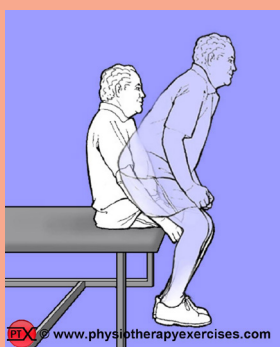
### Client`s aim

To strengthen your calf muscles.

### Client`s instructions

Stand with your feet together holding onto something steady like your kitchen bench. Start with your heels on the ground. Finish with your heels off the ground.

## Standing up and sitting down



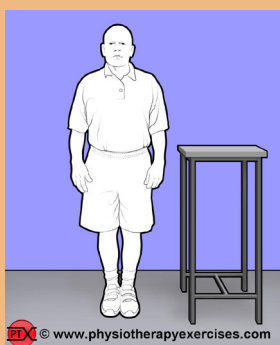
### Client`s aim

To improve sit to stand ability

### Client`s instructions

Position yourself sitting on a chair or bed with your feet underneath your knees. Practice standing up and sitting down. Ensure your shoulders and knees move forward while you move between sitting and standing, make sure your weight is spread equally through both legs. Use your hands to assist you to stand up if necessary.

## Stand with narrow base of support

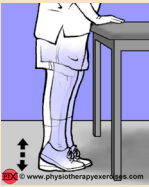

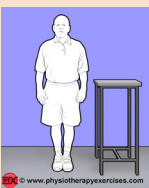


### Client`s aim

Stand with narrow base of support

### Client`s instructions

Stand with your feet together and make sure you have a stable support nearby. Practice maintaining the position. Ensure that hand support is used if you feel unsteady. If this is too difficult stand with your feet further apart.

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# SAFE EXERCISE AT HOME

## EXERCISE EXAMPLE - LEVEL 2, MODERATE

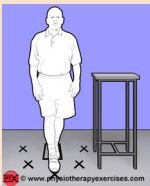
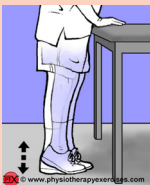

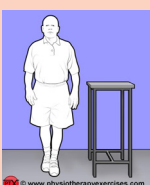
Level 2 exercises are likely to be suitable for you if you:

- Have a well-controlled medical condition
- Get puffed easily or feel a little unsteady
- Can walk down the street
- Get minimal help with daily activities.

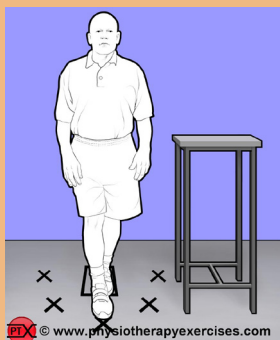
Some examples of exercises for this level are shown on the next page. Remember it is important to exercise safely. If you need assistance, a physiotherapist can help you decide how to start exercising safely. The *Safe exercise at home* website also has links to video / YouTube videos of suitable exercises, and tips on how hard you should work and how to stay motivated.

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## Stepping to targets with hand support nearby



### Client`s aim

To improve your ability to walk in different directions.

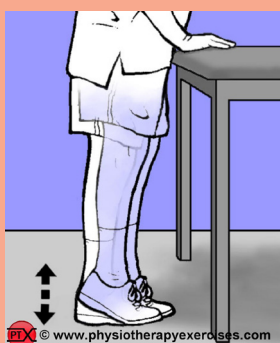
### Client`s instructions

Position yourself standing with targets placed in a semi-circle on the floor in front of you. Practice stepping to the targets alternately. Ensure that most of your weight is transferred to the front leg and that hand support is used if necessary.

### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Decrease distance to the targets. More advanced: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Increase distance to the targets.

## Bilateral calf raises



### Client`s aim

To strengthen your calf muscles.

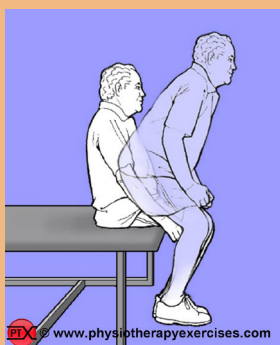
### Client`s instructions

Position yourself standing with your feet together holding on to a support. Start with your heels on the ground. Finish with your heels off the ground.

### Progressions and variations

More advanced: Use less hand support

## Standing up and sitting down



### Client`s aim

To improve your sit to stand ability

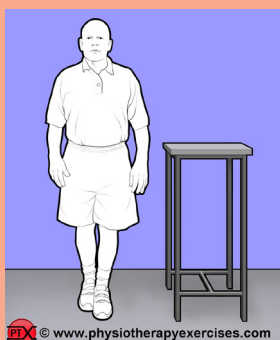
### Client`s instructions

Sit on a chair or bed with your feet underneath your knees. Practice standing up and sitting down. Ensure that your shoulders and knees move forward while you move between sitting and standing, and your weight is spread evenly.

### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Increase the height of the chair. 2. Use hands to assist. More advanced: Decrease the height of the chair.

## Stand in semi-tandem stance



### Client`s aim

To improve your standing balance

### Client`s instructions

Stand with one foot forward with no space between your feet and a stable support nearby. Practice maintaining the position. Ensure that hand support is used if you feel unsteady.

### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Position the feet further apart.

More advanced: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Turn head and trunk in different directions. 3. Stand with one foot directly in front of the other.

# SAFE EXERCISE AT HOME

## EXERCISE EXAMPLE - LEVEL 3, ADVANCED

Level 3 exercises are likely to be suitable for you if you:

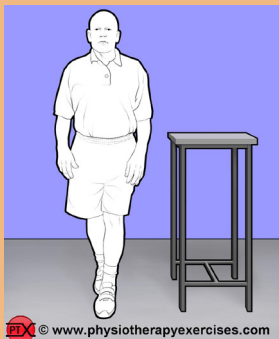
- Regularly walk (at least 30 minutes in one session)
- Feel steady walking outside
- May attend a gym
- Engage in activities such as gardening.

If you have had two or more falls in the past 12 months it is advisable to start on level 1 or 2. You should consult your Doctor or physiotherapist to help you reduce your risk of falling.

Some examples of exercises for this level are shown below. Remember it is important to exercise safely. If you need assistance, a physiotherapist can help. The *Safe exercise at home* website also has links to video / YouTube videos of suitable exercises, and tips on how hard you should work and how to stay motivated.

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### Stand in tandem stance



#### Client`s aim

To improve your ability to stand and balance.

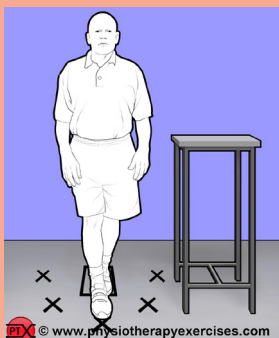
#### Client`s instructions

Position yourself standing with one foot forward in front of the other and a stable support nearby. Practice maintaining the position. Ensure that hand support is used if you feel unsteady. Repeat with other foot in front.

#### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Position the feet in semi-tandem stance. 2. Position the feet further apart. More advanced: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Turn head and trunk in different directions. 3. Add movement of the arms in different directions. 4. Throw and catch a ball in this position. 6. Stand on one leg.

### Stepping to targets with hand support nearby



#### Client`s aim

To improve your ability to walk in different directions.

#### Client`s instructions

Position yourself standing with feet hip width apart and targets placed in a semi-circle on the floor in front of you. Practice stepping to the targets alternately. Ensure that most of your weight is transferred to the stepping leg and that hand support is used if necessary.

#### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Decrease distance to the targets. More advanced: 1. Remove hand support. 2. Increase distance to the targets. 3. Place the targets in a full circle.

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## Walking up and down stairs



### Client`s aim

To improve your ability to walk up and down stairs.

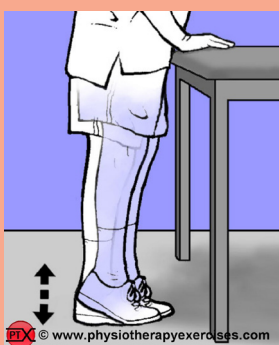
### Client`s instructions

Position yourself standing at the bottom or top of a flight of stairs. Practice walking up and down the stairs.

### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Decrease the height of the stairs. 2. Walk down one step at a time. 3. Use hand-rail for balance. More advanced: 1. Increase the height of the stairs. 2. Wear a backpack with weights in it.

## Bilateral calf raises



### Client`s aim

To strengthen your calf muscles.

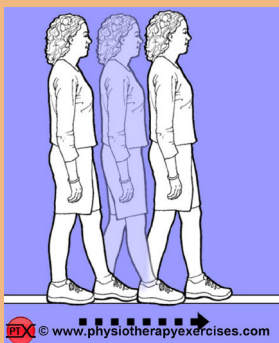
### Client`s instructions

Position yourself standing with your feet together. Start with your heels on the ground. Finish with your heels off the ground.

### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Provide hand support for balance. More advanced: 1. Stand on one leg at a time

## Walk heel to toe



### Client`s aim

To improve your ability to walk and balance.

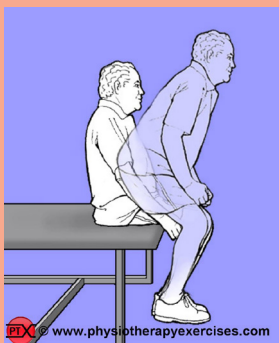
### Client`s instructions

Position yourself standing on a line with one foot directly in front of the other. Practice walking along the line by placing one foot straight in front of the other, i.e., heel to toe.

### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Place feet on either side of the line.

## Standing up and sitting down



### Client`s aim

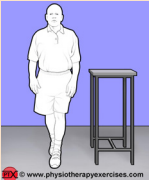
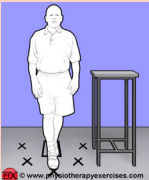

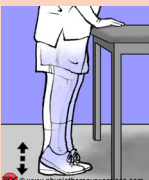
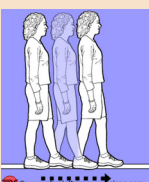

To improve your sit to stand ability

### Client`s instructions

Position yourself sitting on a chair or bed with your feet underneath your knees. Practice standing up and sitting down. Ensure your shoulders and knees move forward as you sit and stand, and your weight is borne equally through both legs.

### Progressions and variations

Less advanced: 1. Increase the height of the chair. More advanced: 1. Decrease the height of the chair.

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## NOTES:

