Just 10-Minutes A Day: Exercises for Seniors

A Physical Therapist's Guide to Build Strength and Improve Balance

By Melody Santos, Physical Therapist

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Abdominal Breathing

Place one hand on your abdomen.
Inhale slowly through your nose, letting your belly rise.
Then exhale gently through pursed lips.
Repeat 5 times.

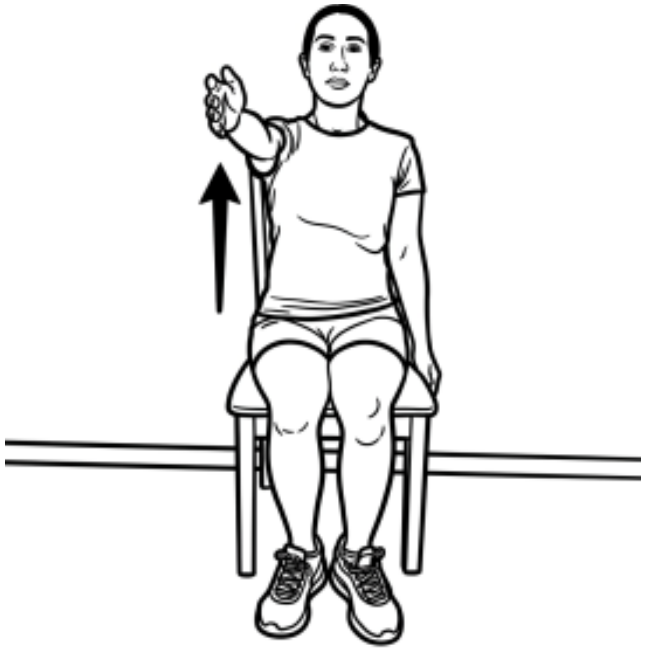
Neck Turns

Sit tall with both feet flat on the floor.
Slowly turn your head to look over your right shoulder, then return to center.
Switch sides.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Shoulder Rolls

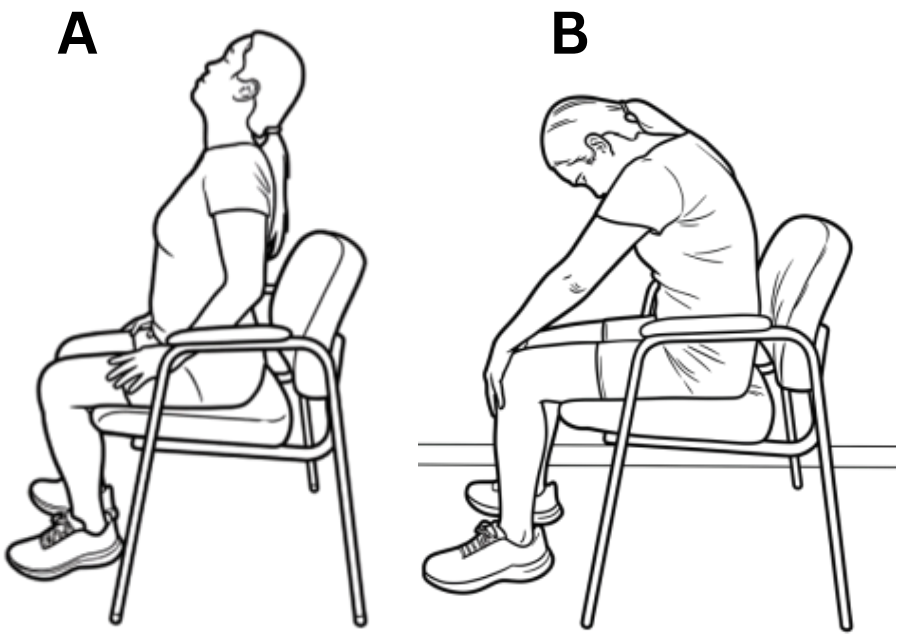
Roll both shoulders upward, backward, downward, and forward. Repeat 10 times. Then roll both shoulders in the opposite direction. Repeat 10 times.

Arm Raises



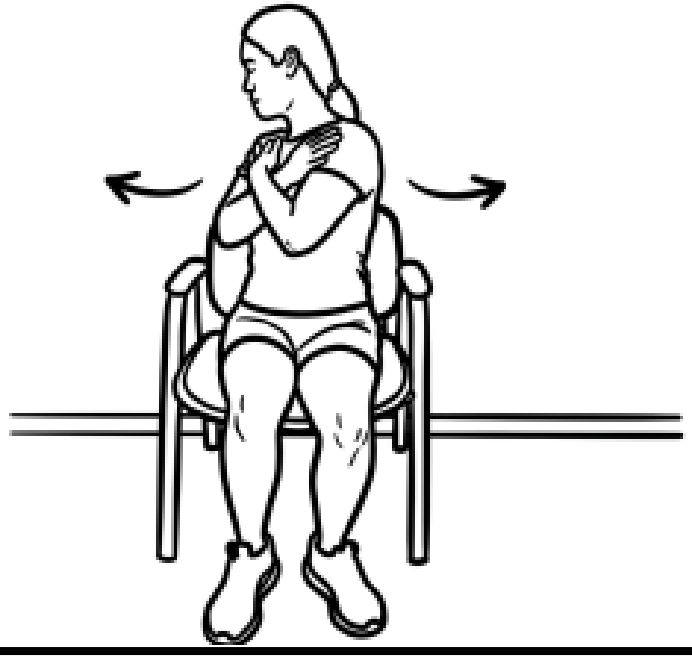
Sit tall and with your thumb pointing up, lift your right arm forward to shoulder height, then lower with control.
Switch arms.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Seated Camel–Cat



Place both hands on your thighs.
Inhale and gently arch your back, lifting your chest and chin slightly (A).
Next, exhale and round your back forward, tucking your chin toward your chest (B).
Repeat 5 times.

Seated Trunk Rotation



Sit tall and cross your arms over your chest.
Rotate the upper body gently to the right, then return to center.
Switch sides.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Ankle Pumps

Extend your right leg slightly and point your foot up and down. Repeat 10 times
Switch legs.

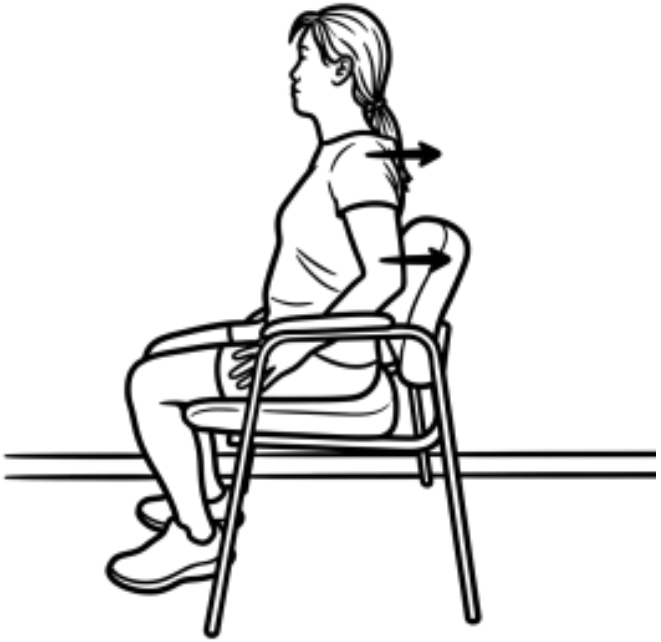
Wrist Circles

Extend both arms forward, palms facing down.
Perform slow circles of both wrists in one direction.
Switch directions.
Repeat 10 times in each direction.

Seated Heel Raises

Sit tall with both feet flat on the floor.
Keeping your toes on the ground, slowly raise both heels as high as comfortable.
Pause briefly, then lower with control.
Repeat 10 times.

Shoulder Blade Squeezes

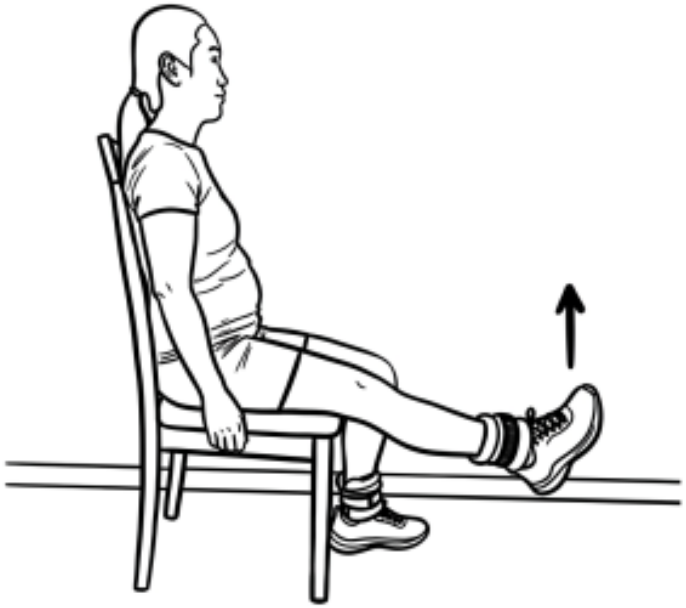


Sit tall with arms relaxed at your sides.
Squeeze both shoulder blades together, then relax.
Repeat 10 times.

Biceps Curls

Hold a light dumbbell in each hand.
Bring the weight in your right hand toward your shoulder.
Pause briefly at the top, then lower slowly.
Switch sides.
Repeat 10 times on each side.

Knee Extension



Wrap a light ankle weight around your ankles.
Lift your right foot as high as comfortable and straighten your right knee.
Hold briefly at the top, then slowly lower it with control.
Switch legs.
Repeat 10 times on each side.

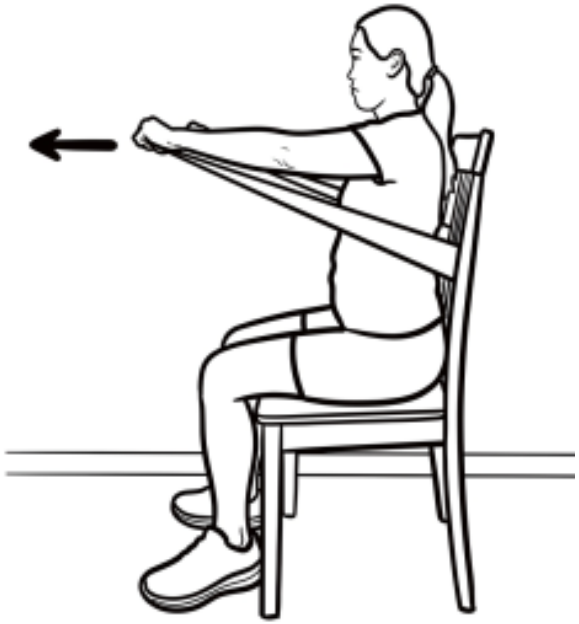
Seated Hip Abduction

Loop a light resistance band around your thighs.
Step to the side with your right leg then slowly return to the center.
Switch legs.
Repeat 10 times on each side.

Rows

Place a light resistance band under both feet.
Grip one end in each hand and draw both arms back. Then let your arms return slowly and with control.
Repeat 10 times.

Chest Press



Loop a light resistance band around the back of your chair, just below shoulder height.
Hold each end of the band at chest level, palms down.
Press both arms forward until they are almost straight, as if punching, then slowly return with control.
Repeat 10 times.

Forward V Raise (Scaption)

Hold light dumbbells in each hand.
Raise both arms forward and out to the side forming a wide “V” in front of you until your hands reach shoulder height.
Pause briefly, then lower with control.
Repeat 10 times.

Overhead Press

Sit tall, holding light dumbbells at shoulder height, palms facing each other.
Press both arms upward until they are almost straight, as if punching toward the ceiling, then lower them slowly with control.
Repeat 10 times on each side.
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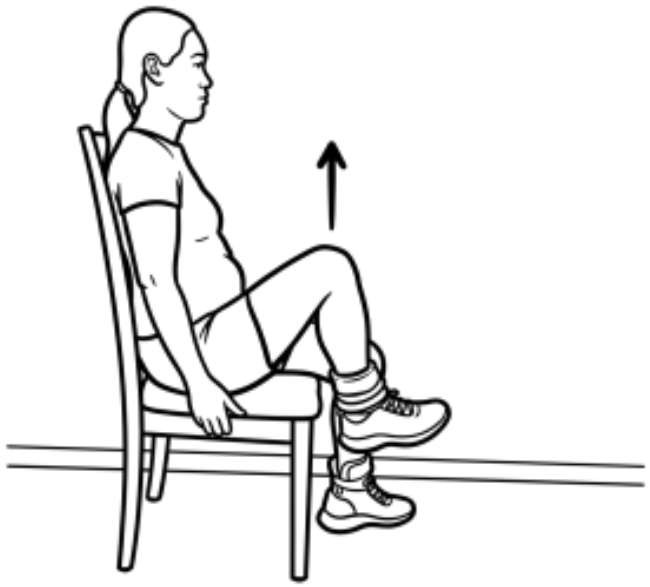
Overhead Reach and Side Bend

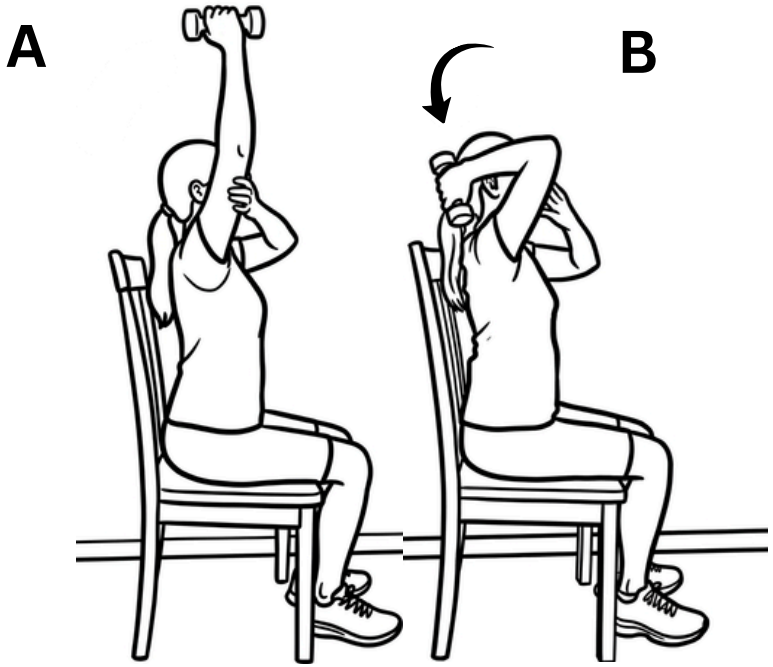
Raise your right arm overhead, then gently side bend toward the left side. Hold briefly, then return to the center with control.
Repeat 5 times then switch sides.

Hip Flexion



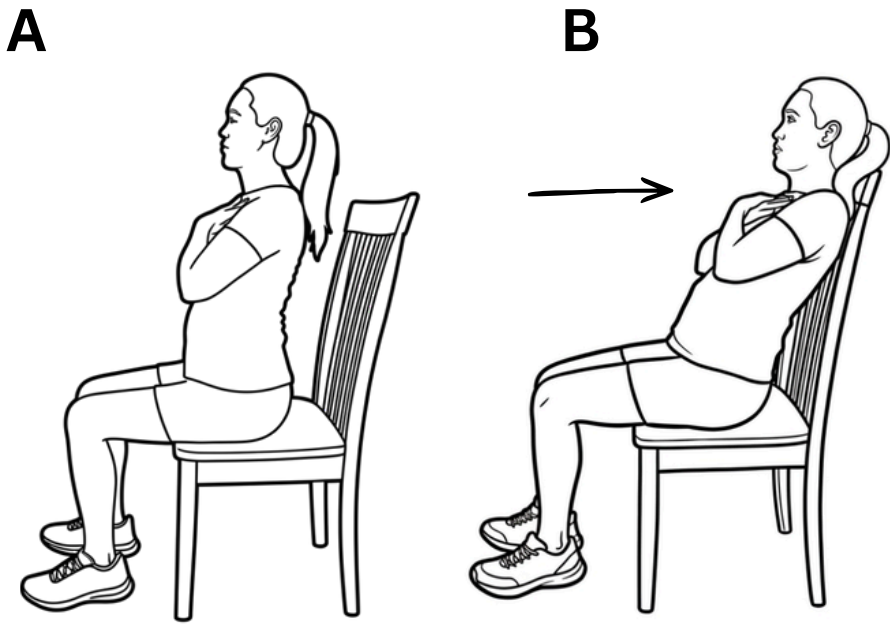
Wrap a light ankle weight around your ankles.
Sit tall and lift your right foot off the floor as high as comfortable.
Pause briefly at the top, then lower it to the floor with control.
Repeat 10 times then switch legs .

Triceps Extension



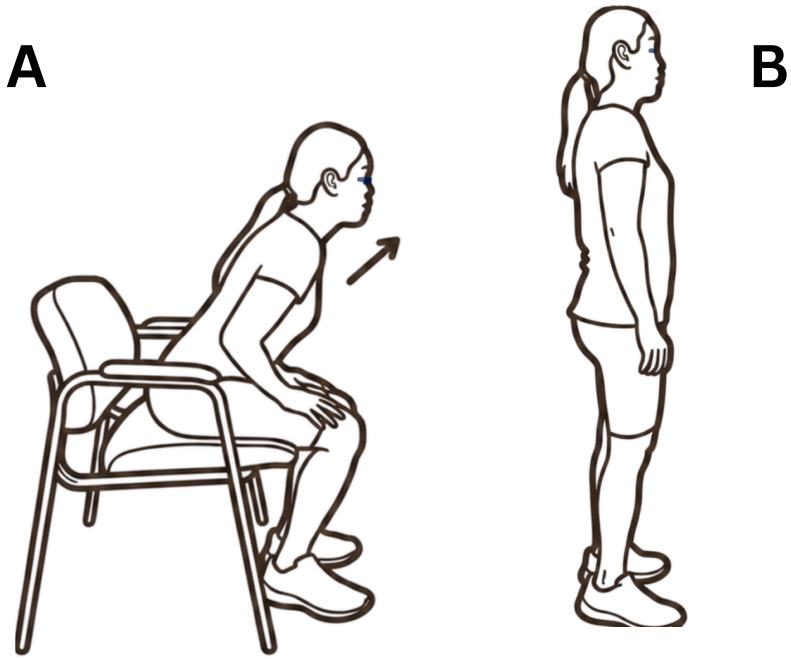
Hold a light dumbbell overhead with your right hand (A).
Bend your right elbow and slowly lower the weight toward your shoulder (B).
Use your left hand to support your right arm if needed.
Next, straighten your right elbow to return to the starting position.
Repeat 10 times then switch sides.

Seated Curl Up



Sit tall, close to the front edge of the chair.
Place both hands lightly crossed over your chest (A).
Lean back slowly against the back of the chair (B).
Next, lean forward slowly until you return to your starting position. Count out as you lean back.
Repeat 10 times.

Sit to Stand



Scoot to the front of the chair.
Slide both feet back until they are under your knees and lean forward (A) then stand up with control (B).
Use your hands to push up as needed.
Next, lean forward and sit down slowly.
Repeat 10 times.

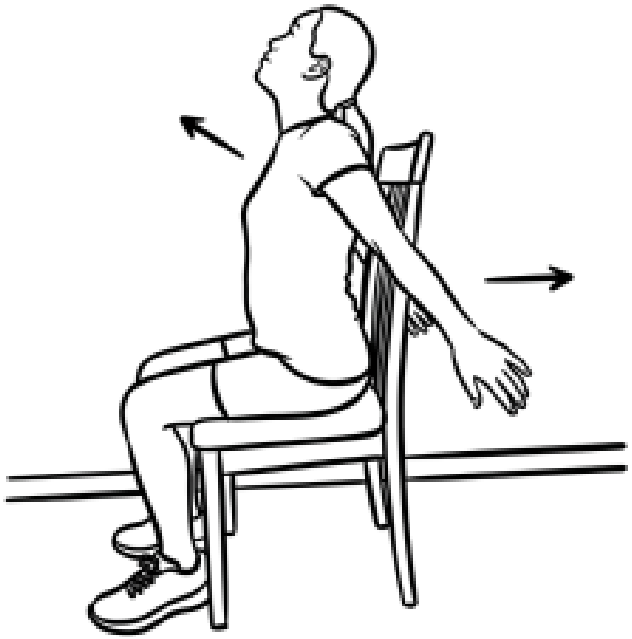
Shoulder Stretch

Bring your right arm across your chest.
Use your left hand to gently press your right arm closer to your body.
Hold 3 seconds, then relax.
Switch arms.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Neck Side Bend Stretch

Gently tilt your head to the right, bringing your right ear toward your right shoulder.
Hold 3 seconds, then return to center.
Switch sides
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Chest Opener



Extend your arms back as far as comfortable, then slowly look up.
Hold 3 seconds then look straight ahead and return your arms to your sides..
Repeat 10 times.

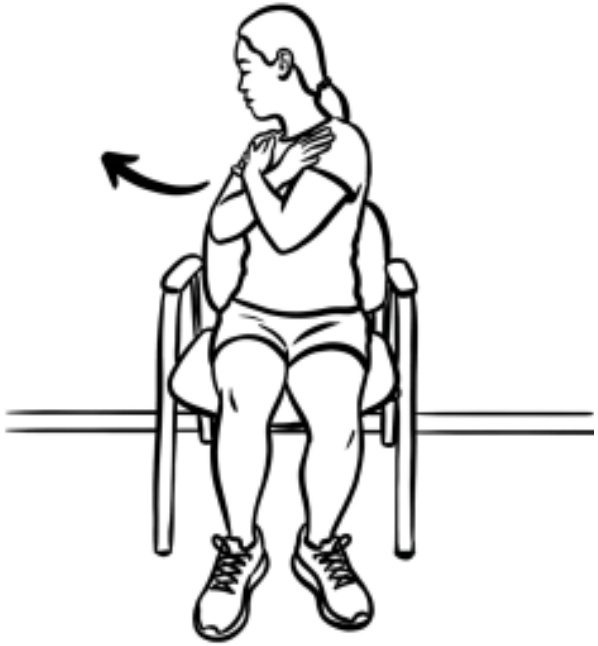
Seated Hamstring Stretch

Extend your right leg and point your toes toward the ceiling.
Slowly lean your trunk forward until you feel a gentle stretch in the back of your thigh.
Hold 3 seconds, then lean back and point your toes down.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Seated Calf Stretch

Loop a towel around the ball of your foot.
Gently pull both ends of the towel toward you until you feel a gentle stretch along the back of your lower leg.
Hold 3 seconds, then relax.
Switch legs.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Trunk Rotation Stretch



Sit tall and cross your arms over your chest.
Gently turn your upper body to the right, looking over the right shoulder.
Hold 3 seconds then return to center.
Next, rotate your upper body to the left.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Quads Stretch

Sit tall and bend the right knee under the chair as far as comfortable.
Hold 3 seconds, then relax.
Switch legs.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

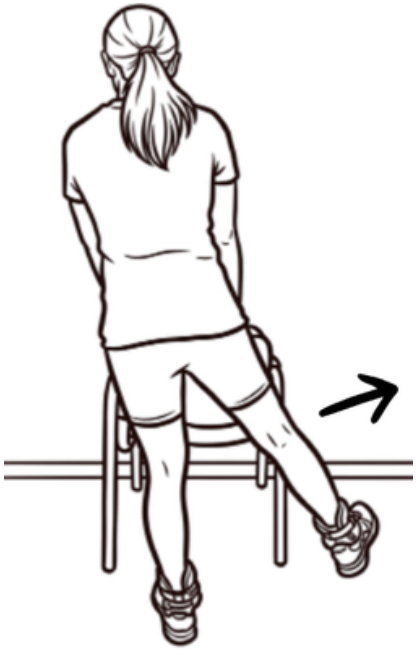
Slow Deep Breathing

Place one hand on your abdomen.
Take a deep breath in, slowly, through your nose, letting your belly rise.
Then exhale gently through pursed lips.
Repeat 5 times.

Standing Heel Raises

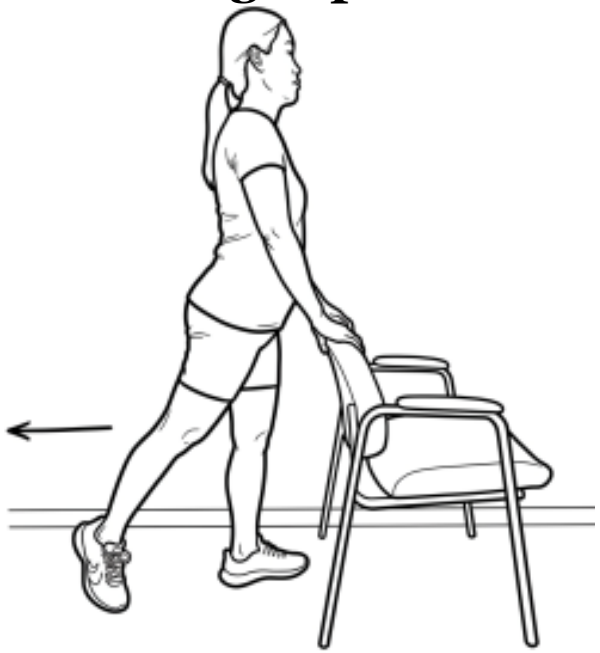
Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Rise up onto the balls of both feet then lower your heels down slowly.
Repeat 10 times.

Standing Hip Abduction



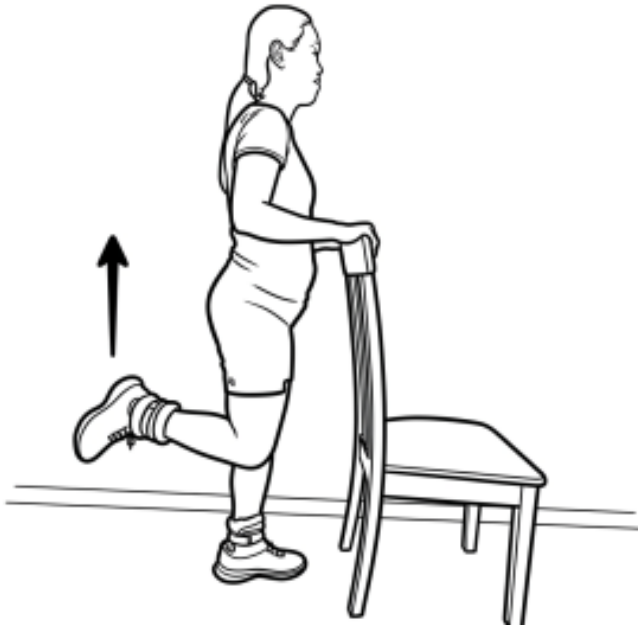
Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Slowly lift the right leg out to the side then lower slowly.
Switch legs.
Repeat 10 times on each side.

Standing Hip Extension



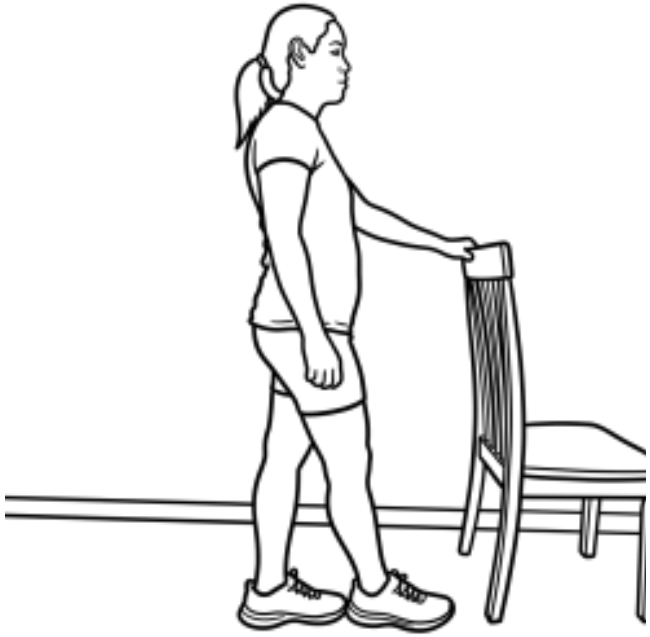
Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Slowly lift your right leg straight back, keeping your trunk upright then lower slowly.
Switch legs.
Repeat 10 times on each side.

Standing Hamstring Curls



Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Slowly bend your right knee, bringing your heel toward your buttocks then lower slowly.
Keep your thighs parallel throughout.
Switch legs.
Repeat 10 times on each side.

Tandem Stance



Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Place your right foot directly in front of the left foot and hold this position for 10 to 30 seconds, then switch feet.
If you can hold only 10 to 20 seconds, repeat the hold 2 to 3 times per side to build toward 30 seconds.

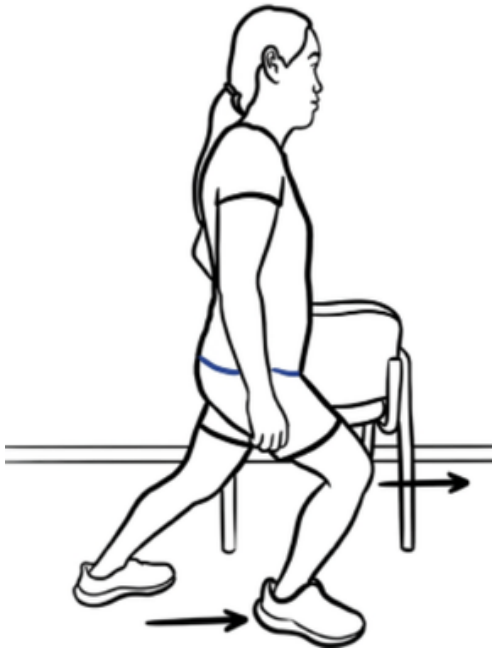
Single Leg Balance

Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Lift your right foot off the floor and hold this position for 10 to 30 seconds, then switch legs.
If you can hold only 10 to 20 seconds, repeat the hold 2 to 3 times per side to build toward 30 seconds.

Mini Squats

Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Slowly bend your knees and lower your body a few inches as if you're about to sit down.
Straighten up and exhale as you rise.
Repeat 10 times.

Mini Forward Lunge

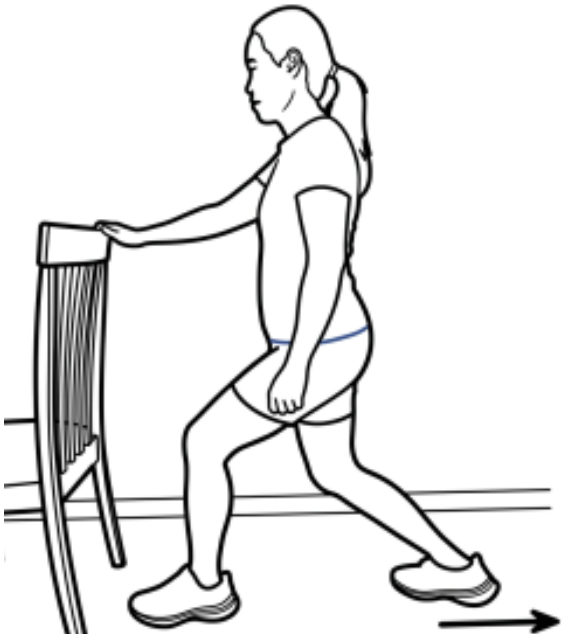


Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Step forward with your right foot, shift your weight onto it, then bend your right knee to end in a mini squat.
Pause briefly then return to back to your starting position. Switch legs.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Mini Side Lunge

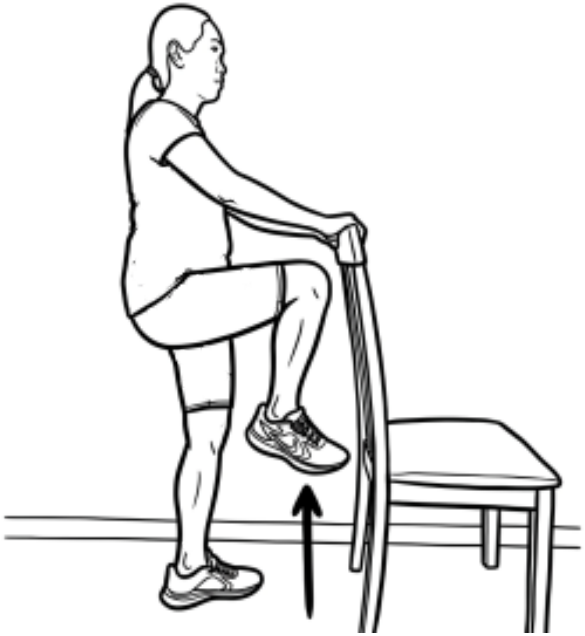
Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Step to the side with your right foot, shift your weight onto it, then bend your right knee to end in a mini squat.
Pause briefly then return to your starting position. Switch legs.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Mini Back Lunge



Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Step back with your right foot, shift your weight onto it, then bend your right knee to end in a mini squat.
Pause briefly then return to your starting position. Switch legs.
Repeat 5 times on each side.

Marching in place



Stand behind your chair, holding it lightly for support if needed.
Slowly lift your right knee up to a comfortable height, then lower it back down.
Switch legs.
Repeat 10 times on each side.

Thank You

I hope this guide supports you as you build strength, improve balance, and stay active with confidence.

With gratitude,
Melody Santos, PT

A Gentle Reminder

Move at your own pace and work within your level. Use a sturdy chair or support when needed, and stop if you feel pain, dizziness, or unusual discomfort. If you have any medical concerns, check with your physician before beginning or continuing the exercise program.