



LIVING WELL TO AGE WELL

Session 2: Essential Exercises for Strength, Vitality, and Independence

INTRODUCTION

In our first session, we discussed sarcopenia—the age-related loss of muscle mass and strength that affects virtually everyone as we grow older. Today, we're going to focus on one of the most powerful tools we have to slow, prevent, and even reverse age-related muscle loss:

EXERCISE

Our goal is to maintain the strength, stability, balance, flexibility, and confidence needed to remain active and independent throughout life.

Future sessions will explore the nutritional and lifestyle strategies that complement these efforts.





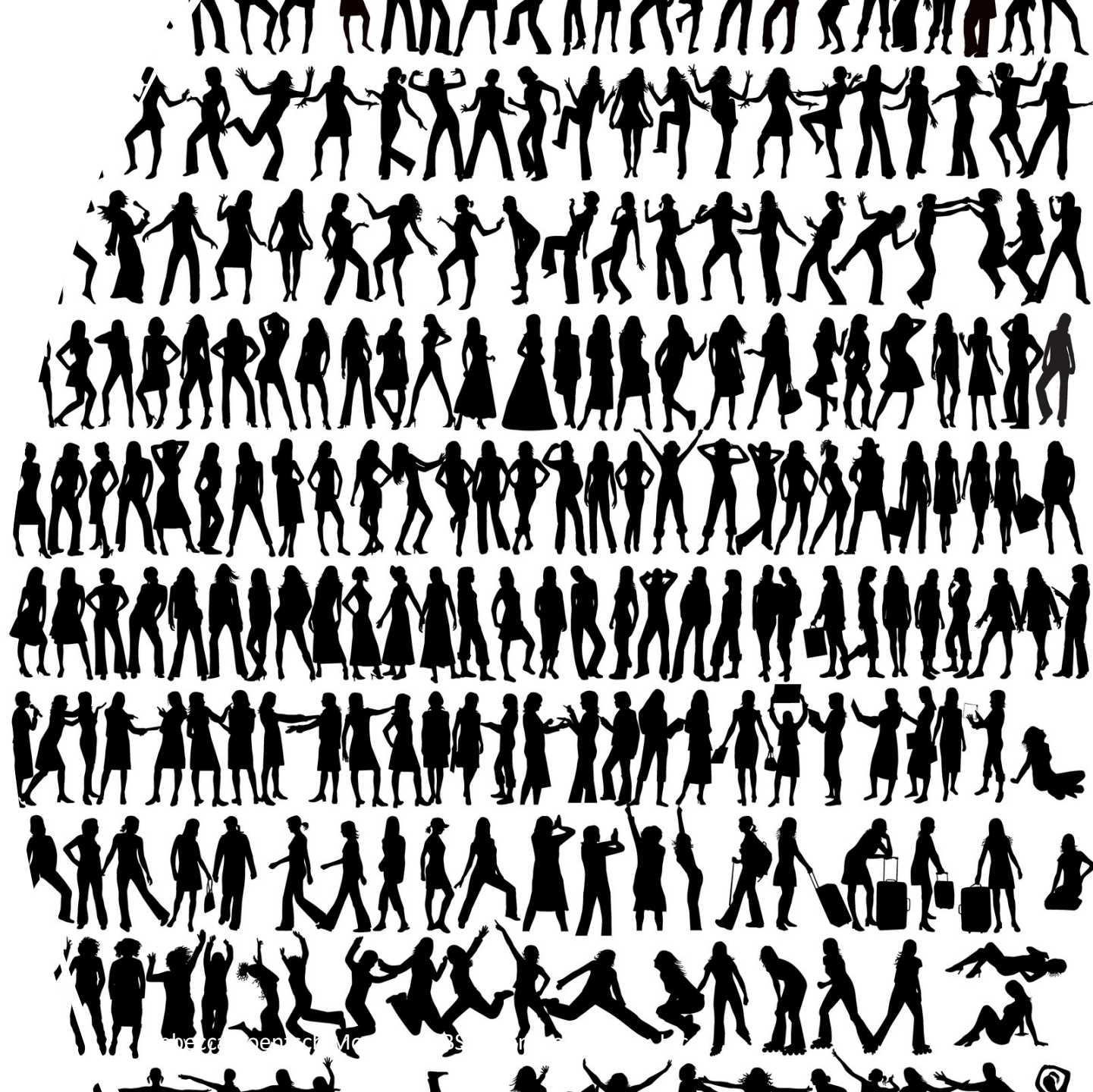
The Good News...

The good news is that preserving strength and independence does not require a gym membership, expensive equipment, or an extreme lifestyle. Small, consistent actions performed daily can dramatically influence how well we age.

While this series is particularly relevant for those already in their senior years, the truth is that healthy aging begins long before we reach that stage of life. The earlier we adopt these habits, the greater the benefits we are likely to enjoy in the years ahead. So, if you're not yet a senior, don't tune out—these principles apply at every age. Simply adapt the recommendations to your current fitness level and circumstances, and consider them an investment in your future health, strength, vitality, and independence.

WHERE SHOULD MY EXERCISE FOCUS BE?

When it comes to maintaining strength, stability, balance, flexibility, and independence, where should I focus my efforts?





Walking is a wonderful for many reasons...

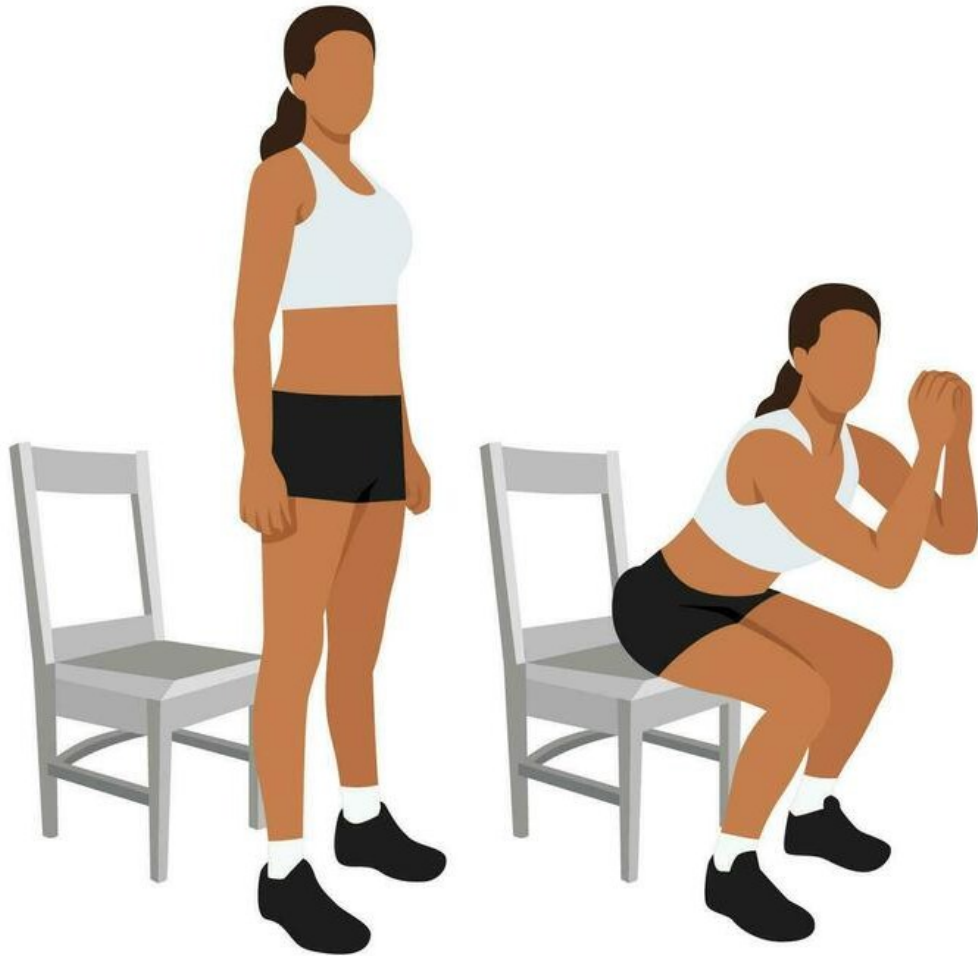
Walking supports cardiovascular health, circulation, mood, cognition, and overall vitality.

But walking does not adequately train all the movement patterns required to maintain independence as we age.

To remain strong, capable, and confident, we must preserve the ability to:

- Rise from a chair
- Climb stairs
- Reach overhead
- Recover our balance
- Lift and carry objects
- Prevent falls
- Maintain posture and stability

The exercises we'll discuss today are designed specifically around those real-world abilities.



1. CHAIR SQUATS (Sit-to-Stand Training)

Purpose:

Preserve the ability to rise from chairs, toilets, beds, and vehicles.

Muscles Trained:

- Quadriceps
- Gluteal muscles
- Core

Why It Matters:

- The ability to stand from a seated position is one of the clearest indicators of functional independence.
- Many daily activities depend upon this simple movement, yet it is often one of the first abilities to decline.

Key Message: If we lose the ability to rise confidently from a chair, we begin losing independence.

Chair Squats: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Sit near the front of a sturdy chair.
- Place feet hip-width apart.
- Lean slightly forward from the hips.
- Press through your heels and stand up.
- Slowly lower yourself back to the chair.
- Avoid dropping into the seat.

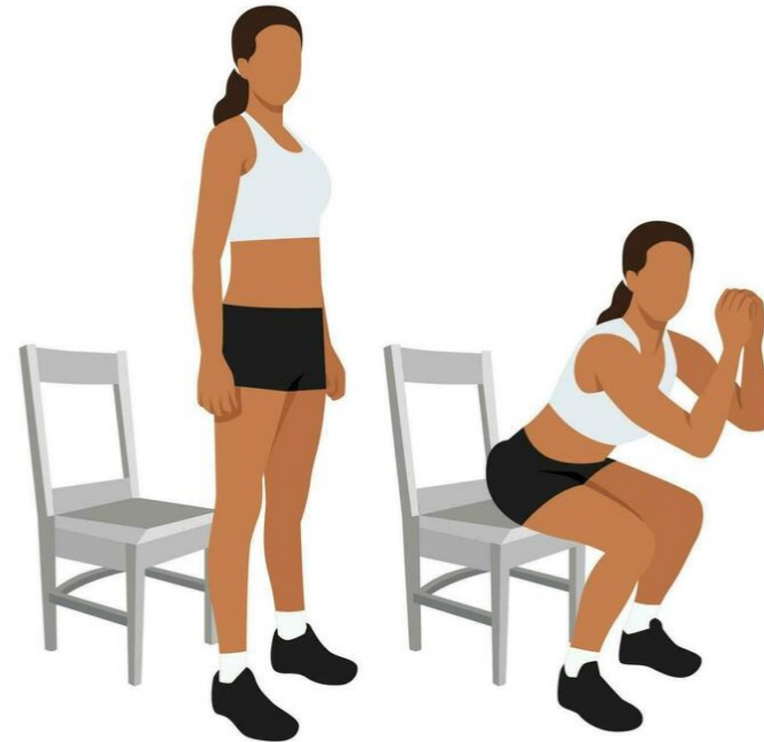
Starting Goal:

- 5 repetitions

Progress Toward:

- 10–15 repetitions
- 1–3 sets

Tip: Use your hands on the chair if needed initially, then gradually rely less on them.





2. STANDING SIDE LEG RAISES

Purpose:

Improve balance and reduce fall risk.

Muscles Trained:

- Gluteus medius
- Gluteus minimus
- Hip stabilizers

Why It Matters:

- These muscles stabilize the pelvis while walking and standing.
- Weakness in these muscles contributes significantly to instability and falls.

Key Message: Strong hips help keep us upright.

STANDING SIDE LEG RAISES: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Stand tall behind a chair or beside a counter.
- Hold lightly for support.
- Lift one leg out to the side without leaning.
- Pause briefly.
- Slowly lower.
- Repeat on the opposite side.

Starting Goal:

- 8 repetitions per side

Progress Toward:

- 12–15 repetitions per side
- 1–3 sets

Tip: Keep your toes pointing forward rather than turning the foot outward.



3. MARCHING IN PLACE

Purpose:

Improve walking mechanics and foot clearance.

Muscles Trained:

- Hip flexors
- Core
- Balance systems

Why It Matters:

- Many falls begin with a simple trip.
- Maintaining the ability to lift the feet properly helps us navigate stairs, curbs, uneven terrain, and everyday obstacles.

Key Message: Confident walking begins with controlled lifting of the legs.





MARCHING IN PLACE: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Stand tall.
- Hold a chair or counter if needed.
- Lift one knee comfortably.
- Lower and alternate sides.
- Move slowly and under control.

Starting Goal:

- 20 marches total

Progress Toward:

- 1–2 minutes continuously

Tip: Focus on lifting the knees rather than marching faster.

4. BRIDGES

Purpose:

Strengthen the muscles responsible for posture, walking, and climbing.

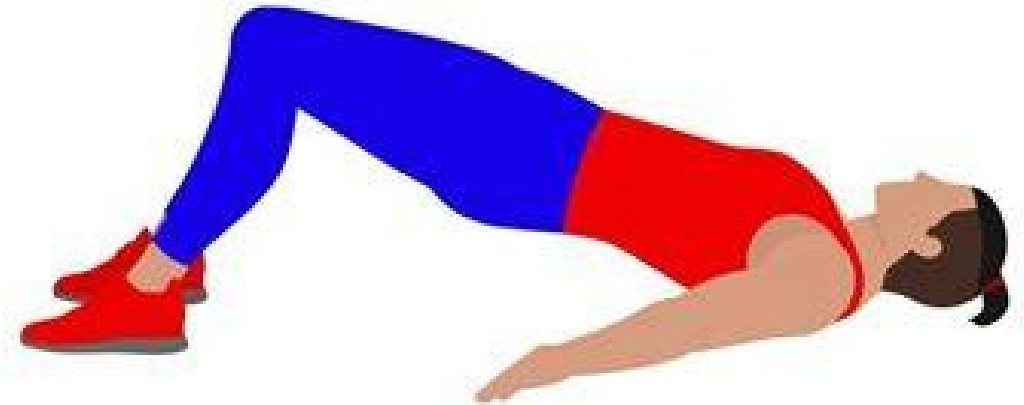
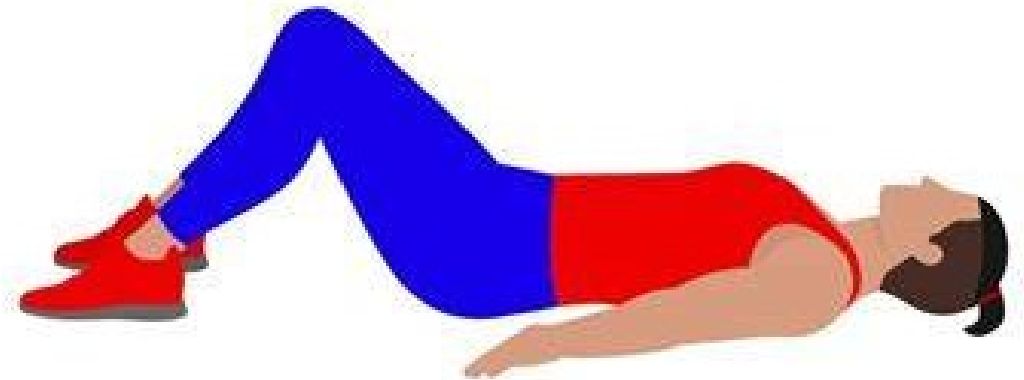
Muscles Trained:

- Gluteus maximus
- Hamstrings
- Core

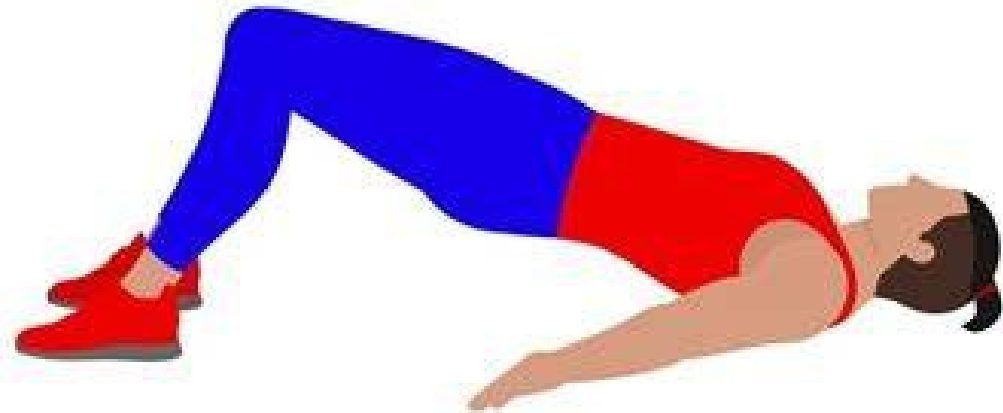
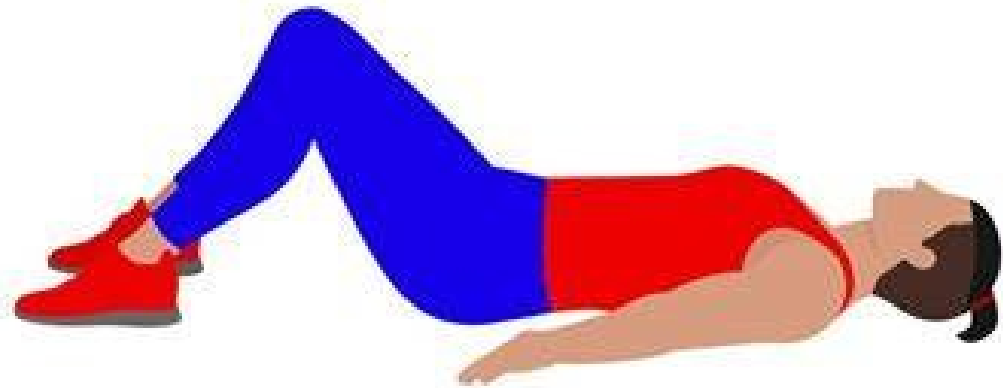
Why It Matters:

- Modern lifestyles often leave the gluteal muscles underused and weakened.
- These muscles are essential for standing, climbing stairs, walking efficiently, and protecting the lower back.

Key Message: Strong glutes are one of the foundations of healthy aging.



GLUTE BRIDGE



GLUTE BRIDGE

BRIDGES: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Lift hips until shoulders, hips, and knees form a straight line.
- Pause briefly.
- Slowly lower.

Starting Goal:

- 5–8 repetitions

Progress Toward:

- 10–15 repetitions
- 1–3 sets

Tip: Squeeze the buttocks at the top of the movement.



5. OVERHEAD PRESSES

Purpose:

Preserve reaching and lifting abilities.

Muscles Trained:

- Shoulders
- Arms
- Upper back
- Core

Why It Matters:

- Everyday life requires us to reach overhead repeatedly.
- Placing items on shelves, retrieving objects from cabinets, lifting luggage, and performing household tasks all depend upon maintaining overhead strength.

Key Message: If we stop reaching overhead, eventually we lose the ability to do so.



OVERHEAD PRESSES: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Hold light dumbbells, water bottles, or soup cans at shoulder height.
- Press upward until arms are nearly straight.
- Lower slowly back to shoulder level.

Starting Goal:

- 5–8 repetitions

Progress Toward:

- 10–15 repetitions
- 1–3 sets

Tip: Avoid arching the lower back.

6. CLAMSHELLS

Purpose:

Strengthen deep hip stabilizers.

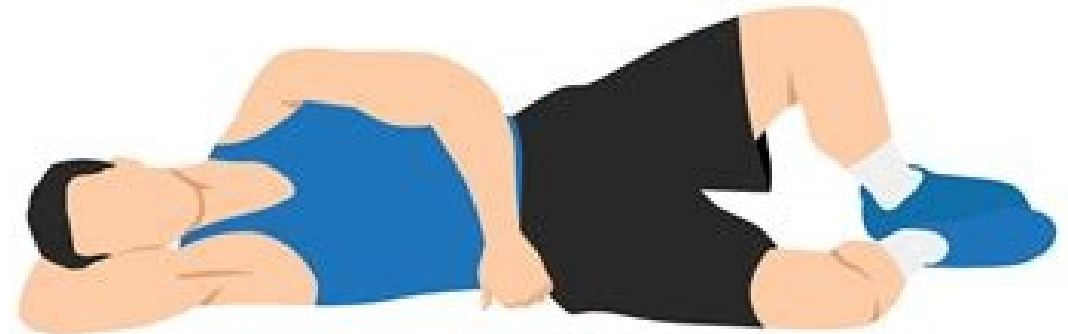
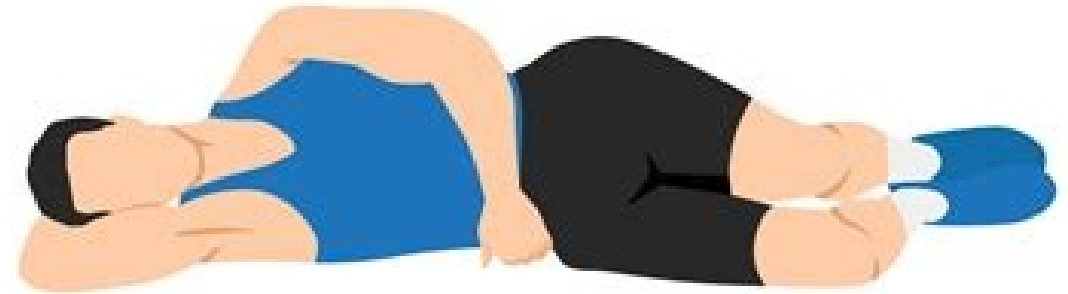
Muscles Trained:

- Gluteus medius
- Deep hip rotators

Why It Matters:

- These muscles improve walking efficiency, pelvic stability, knee alignment, and balance.
- Clamshells are particularly helpful for those experiencing knee discomfort, hip instability, or balance challenges.

Key Message: Small muscles often perform big jobs.





CLAMSHELLS: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Lie on your side with knees bent.
- Keep feet together.
- Lift the top knee while keeping feet touching.
- Lower slowly.

Starting Goal:

- 8 repetitions per side

Progress Toward:

- 12–15 repetitions per side
- 1–3 sets

Tip: Keep hips stacked; don't roll backward.



7. WALL PUSH-UPS

Purpose:

Maintain upper body pushing strength.

Muscles Trained:

- Chest
- Shoulders
- Arms
- Core

Why It Matters:

- Pushing strength is required for opening doors, getting up from the floor, stabilizing ourselves during a stumble, and countless daily activities.
- Walking provides almost no stimulus for these muscles.

Key Message: Upper body strength contributes directly to independence.

INCLINE WALL PUSH-UP



WALL PUSH-UPS: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Stand arm's length from a wall.
- Place hands on the wall at shoulder height.
- Bend elbows and bring chest toward the wall.
- Push back to starting position.

Starting Goal:

- 5 repetitions

Progress Toward:

- 10–15 repetitions
- 1–3 sets

Tip: Keep your body in a straight line throughout the movement.

8. HEEL RAISES

Purpose:

Improve ankle strength and balance.

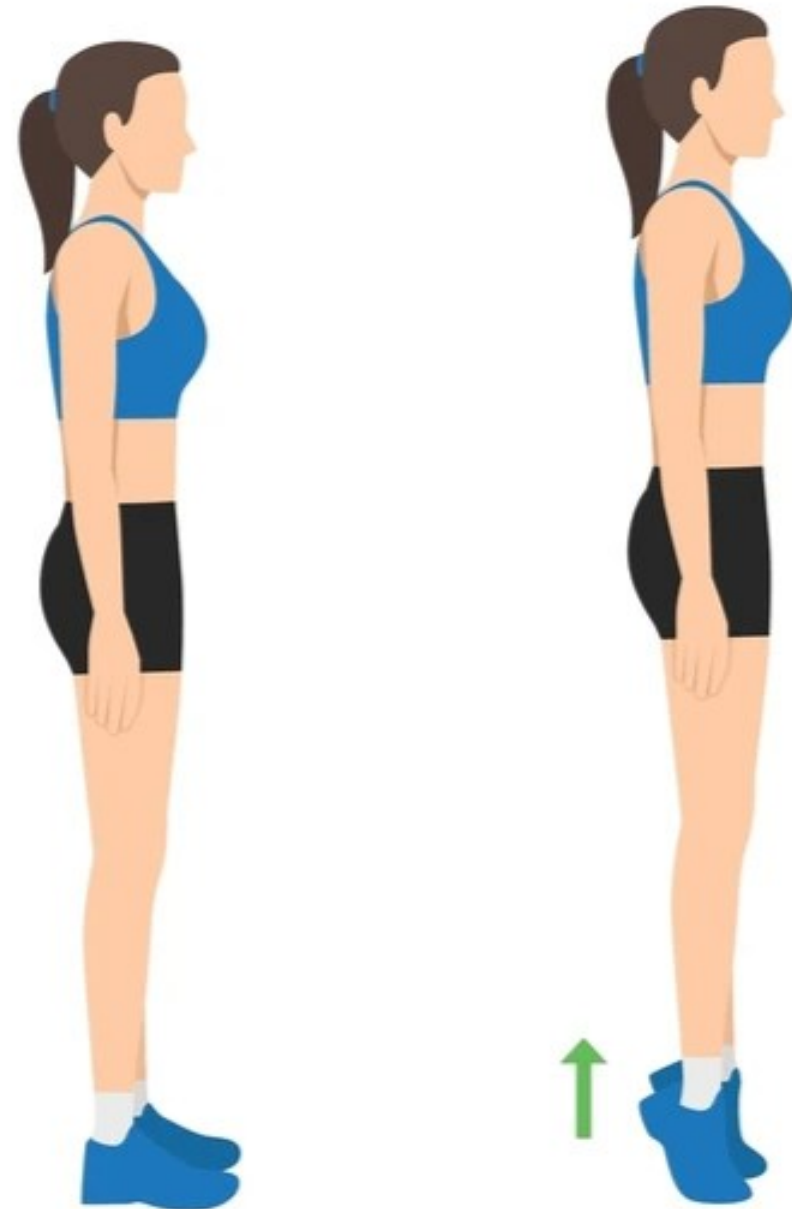
Muscles Trained:

- Calves
- Ankles
- Foot stabilizers

Why It Matters:

- The ankles play a critical role in balance recovery and walking confidence.
- They are often overlooked until instability develops.

Key Message: Strong ankles create a stable foundation.



HEEL RAISES: How to Perform

How to Perform:

- Stand behind a chair or counter.
- Rise onto your toes.
- Pause briefly.
- Slowly lower.

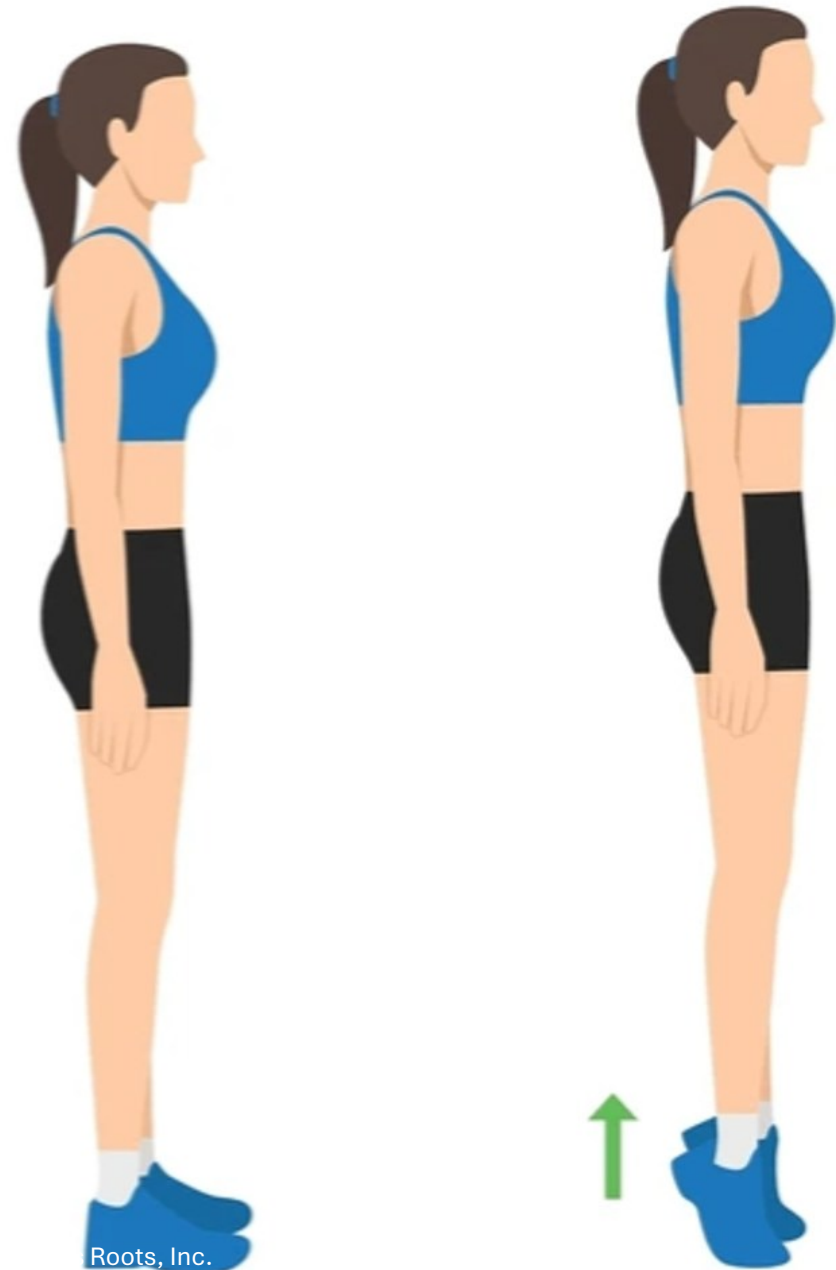
Starting Goal:

- 10 repetitions

Progress Toward:

- 15–20 repetitions
- 1–3 sets

Tip: Move slowly rather than bouncing.



9. SINGLE-LEG STANDING

Purpose:

Improve balance, stability, and fall prevention.

Muscles Trained:

- Ankles
- Calves
- Hip stabilizers
- Core muscles

Why It Matters:

Balance naturally declines with age, increasing the risk of falls and injury. Many people assume poor balance is simply an unavoidable part of getting older, but balance is a skill that can be practiced and improved.

Standing on one leg challenges the body's balance systems while strengthening the muscles that help keep us upright and steady during daily activities such as walking, turning, climbing stairs, and stepping over obstacles.

This simple exercise can help improve confidence, coordination, and overall mobility.

Key Message: Balance is a skill that can be practiced, strengthened, and maintained throughout life.





SINGLE-LEG STANDING: How to Perform

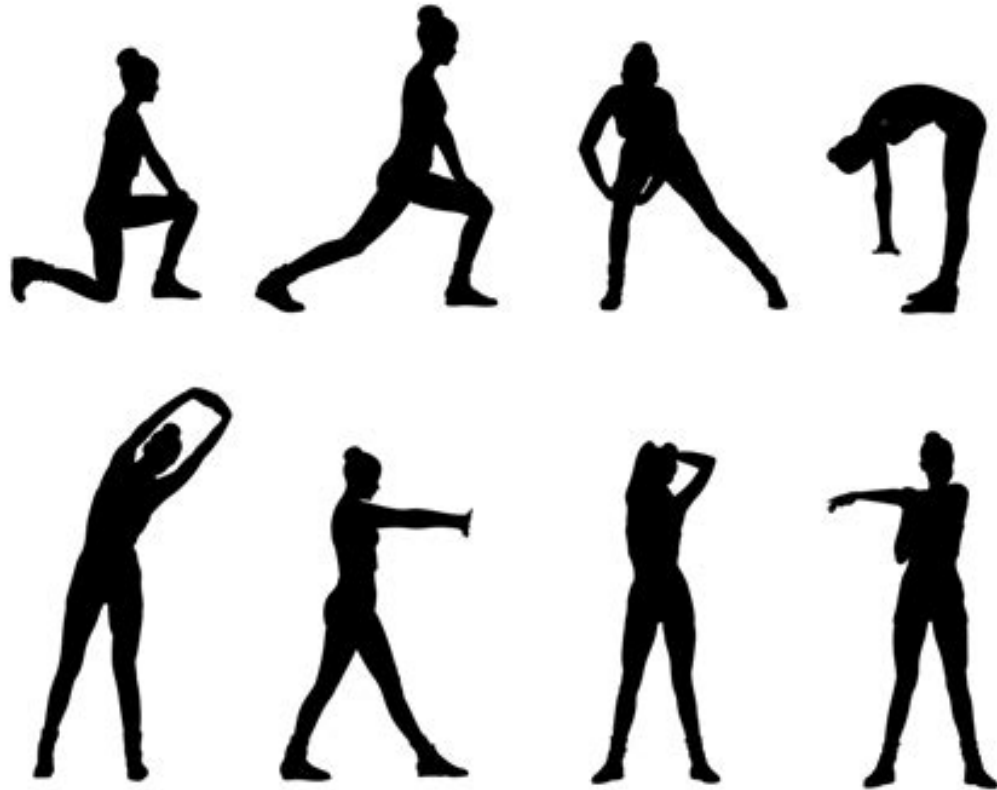
How to Perform:

- Stand behind a chair or beside a counter.
- Hold lightly for support.
- Lift one foot slightly off the floor.
- Maintain an upright posture.
- Repeat on the opposite side.

Starting Goal:

- Hold 5–10 seconds per leg
- **Progress Toward:**
- Hold 30 seconds per leg

Tip: As balance improves, reduce reliance on your hands.



SIMPLE DAILY STRETCHES

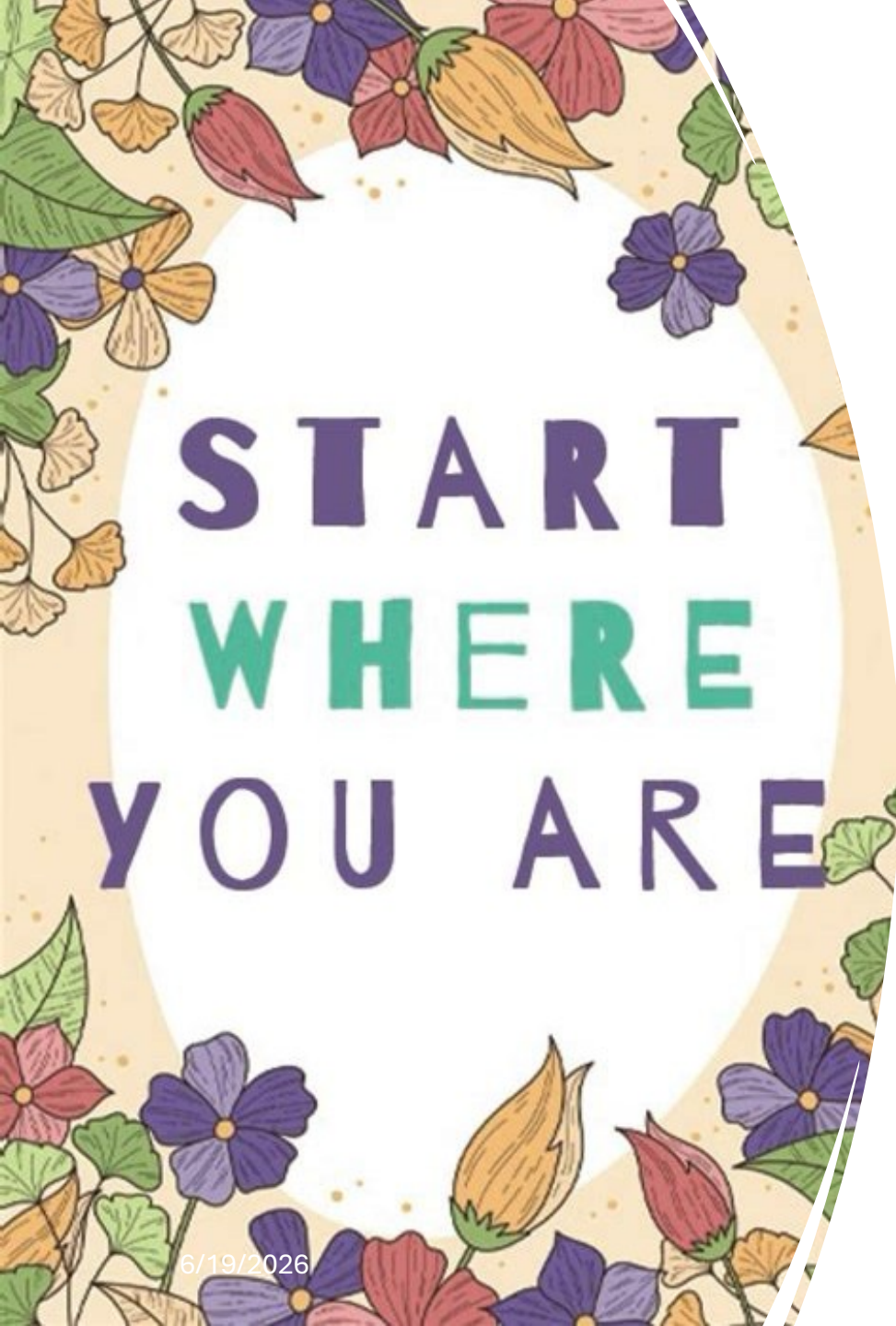
Consider incorporating a few gentle stretches before and/or after your exercise routine:

- Neck stretches
- Shoulder rolls and shoulder stretches
- Chest-opening stretches
- Side bends
- Hamstring stretches
- Calf stretches
- Quadriceps stretches
- Hip stretches
- Gentle spinal twists

Hold each stretch for approximately 15–30 seconds.

Stretch to the point of mild tension, never pain.

Move slowly, breathe normally, and avoid bouncing.



START WHERE YOU ARE

6/19/2026

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Progress gradually.

Consistency matters far more than intensity.

If exercise is new to you, don't become discouraged. Small, steady efforts performed consistently will yield far greater results than occasional bursts of ambitious activity.

You may be pleasantly surprised by how quickly your strength, stamina, balance, and flexibility begin to improve.

Always listen to your body, and if you have significant health concerns, chronic medical conditions, recent injuries, balance issues, or questions about whether a particular exercise is appropriate for you, consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new exercise program.

Remember: the goal is not perfection. The goal is progress.

Every step you take today is an investment in your future health, strength, vitality, and independence.

COMING NEXT!

Essential Nutrition for Strength,
Vitality, and Independence

Exercise provides the stimulus.

Nutrition provides the fuel and building
materials.

Join me as we explore the foods and
nutritional strategies that help support
muscle strength, energy, recovery,
brain health, immune function, and
healthy aging from the inside out.





Thank you!

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Rebecca Roentsch Montrone, BS

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