



## **The SAIL Program Stay Active and Independent for Life**

### **Information for primary care providers and physical therapists:**

The SAIL exercise class is a strength, balance, and fitness class which meets three times per week for one hour. There are up to 20 participants in each class and the exercises can be done in sitting or standing. The class includes aerobics, balance exercises, strength training with wrist and ankle weights, and stretching exercises. Classes are led by certified fitness instructors who have attended additional training specific to leading SAIL classes for older adults.

For motivation and assessment, the class participants undergo baseline “Fitness Checks” when they start the exercise class. These checks are repeated at regular intervals throughout the year. The Fitness Checks include:

- 8-Foot Up & Go – measured in seconds
- Biceps Curl with 5lb (women) or 8lb (men) weight – measured by number of reps in 30 seconds
- Chair Stand – measured by number sit to stand transitions in 30 seconds

Educational information is offered in conjunction with the exercise class. This includes “SAIL: An Information Guide for Adults 65+”, and “SAIL: Class Exercise Guide”. These resources provide information on readiness for exercise, the exercise class, a self-assessment for fall risk, and prevention of falls.

### **SAIL is an evidence-based intervention to reduce fall risk factors in older adults.**

SAIL has been recognized as a Title IIID Evidence-based Health Promotion Program by the Administration on Aging.

[http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA\\_Programs/HPW/Title\\_IIID/index.aspx](http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/HPW/Title_IIID/index.aspx)



## **What to Expect in a SAIL Class**

- One hour of exercise, three times per week
- Classes taught by a qualified instructor
- You can sit or stand – exercises are adapted for all levels of physical ability
- Exercises specifically designed to help maintain and improve your balance
- All participants receive a copy of “Stay Active and Independent for Life: An Information Guide for Adults 65+”

## **How can I get the most from this class?**

- Make sure that you have eaten before attending class
- Keep hydrated – drink plenty of water during the class
- Try to arrive early – that way you are not out of breath before the class starts
- Wear flexible, supportive rubber soled shoes and loose fitting clothing
- Refrain from wearing perfume, aftershave, or scented personal care products
- Make an effort to attend as many classes as possible. The best way to benefit from exercise is to exercise regularly!

# My Falls-Free Plan

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

As we grow older, gradual health changes and some medications can cause falls, but many falls can be prevented. Use this to learn what to do to stay active, independent, and falls-free.

Check "Yes" if you experience this (even if only sometimes)	No	Yes	What to do if you checked "Yes"
Have you had <b>any falls in the last six months</b> ?			<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your doctor(s) about your falls and/or concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> Show this checklist to your doctor(s) to help understand and treat your risks, and protect yourself from falls.
Do you take <b>four or more</b> prescription or over-the-counter medications daily?			<input type="checkbox"/> Review your medications with your doctor(s) <b>and</b> your pharmacist at each visit, and with each new prescription. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask which of your medications can cause drowsiness, dizziness, or weakness as a side effect. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your doctor about anything that could be a medication side effect or interaction.
Do you have <b>any difficulty walking or standing</b> ?			<input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor(s) if you have any pain, aching, soreness, stiffness, weakness, swelling, or numbness in your legs or feet— <b>don't ignore</b> these types of health problems. <input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor(s) about <b>any</b> difficulty walking to discuss treatment. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor(s) if physical therapy or treatment by a medical specialist would be helpful to your problem.
Do you use a <b>cane, walker, or crutches</b> , or have to hold onto things when you walk?			<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor for training from a physical therapist to learn what type of device is best for you, and how to safely use it.
Do you have to <b>use your arms to be able to stand up from a chair</b> ?			<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor for a physical therapy referral to learn exercises to strengthen your leg muscles. <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise at least two or three times a week for 30 min.
Do you ever feel <b>unsteady on your feet, weak, or dizzy</b> ?			<input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor, and ask if treatment by a specialist or physical therapist would help improve your condition. <input type="checkbox"/> Review all of your medications with your doctor(s) or pharmacist if you notice <b>any</b> of these conditions.
Has it been <b>more than two years since you had an eye exam</b> ?			<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule an eye exam every two years to protect your eyesight and your balance.
Has your <b>hearing gotten worse with age</b> , or do your family or friends say you have a hearing problem?			<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a hearing test every two years. <input type="checkbox"/> If hearing aids are recommended, learn <b>how</b> to use them to help protect and restore your hearing, which helps improve and protect your balance.
Do you usually <b>exercise less than two days a week</b> ? (for 30 minutes total each of the days you exercise)			<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor(s) what types of exercise would be good for improving your strength and balance. <input type="checkbox"/> Find some activities that you enjoy and people to exercise with two or three days/week for 30 min.
Do you drink <b>any alcohol</b> daily?			<input type="checkbox"/> Limit your alcohol to one drink per day to avoid falls.
Do you have <b>more than three chronic health conditions</b> ? (such as heart or lung problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, etc. Ask your doctor(s) if you are unsure.)			<input type="checkbox"/> See your doctor(s) as often as recommended to keep your health in good condition. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor(s) what you should do to stay healthy and active with your health conditions. <input type="checkbox"/> Report any health changes that cause weakness or illness as soon as possible.

The more "Yes" answers you have, the greater your chance of having a fall. **Be aware of what can cause falls, and take care of yourself to stay independent and falls-free!**

# Are You Ready to Exercise?

The purpose of this quiz is to help you decide whether it's safe for you to start an exercise program, or to return to exercise after a health-related absence.

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## Section 1. Rate Your Health

Please answer these questions first:

1. Has your doctor or other health care professional told you **NOT** to exercise, or told you that you must restrict your activity?  Yes  No

2. Is **PAIN** preventing you from exercising?  Yes  No

3. If you answered **YES** to question 2, please circle the number that describes your pain on a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (severe pain):

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
*No pain* *Medium pain* *Severe pain*

4. If you answered **YES** to question 2, did you rate your pain at 5 or higher?  Yes  No

**If you answered YES to ANY of the questions in Section 1, you may not be ready to start or return to an exercise program. Please discuss exercise with your doctor.**

**If you answered NO to ALL of the questions in Section 1, please go to Section 2.**

## Section 2. Rate Your Abilities

Can your body do the following activities?

5. Can you dress and bathe/shower without the help of another person?  Yes  No

6. Can you prepare or obtain your own meals?  Yes  No

7. Can you do your usual household chores? (such as cleaning, laundry, gardening)  Yes  No

8. Can you use the telephone? (including looking up numbers, dialing, and answering)  Yes  No

9. Can you do your own errands and shopping?  Yes  No

**If you answered YES to AT LEAST THREE of the questions in Section 2, please go to Section 3.**

**If you answered NO to AT LEAST THREE of the questions in Section 2 because of your health, you may not be ready to start or return to an exercise program. Please discuss exercise with your doctor.**

### Section 3. Rate Your Strength and Walking Ability

Please answer these last questions:

- 10. Can you walk without the help of another person? (It's okay to use a walker or cane.)  Yes  No
- 11. Can you get up from a chair that doesn't have arms without the help of another person? (It's okay to use a walker or cane.)  Yes  No
- 12. Can you drive or arrange your own transportation when needed?  Yes  No
- 13. Can you leave your home for one hour or more for an activity other than a doctor's appointment? (This includes social activities like visiting friends, going to a movie or restaurant, or shopping.)  Yes  No

**If you answered YES to ALL of the questions in Section 3**, it is safe for you start or return to regular exercise, at your own pace.

**If you answered NO to ANY of the questions in Section 3**, you may not be ready to start or return to a regular exercise program yet. Please talk with your doctor about what kinds of exercise you can do to get stronger safely.

### Exercise Instructions from My Health Care Provider:

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**Stay Active  
& Independent  
for Life (SAIL)**

**An Information  
Guide for Adults 65+**



DOH 341-013 April 2006

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY 800-833-6388).

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# Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide information for adults age 65 and older that will help you stay active and independent for life, and help you prevent falls and fall-related injuries—a major threat to independent living.

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalization for older adults in Washington state. Many falls in adults age 65 and older are caused by gradual health changes due to aging, such as chronic health conditions, daily medication use, and changes in muscle strength, balance, vision, and walking ability. By learning to manage these health factors, you can learn to stay active and independent for life.

Many studies indicate that falls among adults age 65 and older can be reduced or prevented. From 2003 to 2005, the Washington State Department of Health conducted a study funded by the CDC (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) involving 453 adults age 65 and older to demonstrate the effectiveness of a community program developed to prevent falls, which included:

- Identification of individual risk factors.
- Group strength, balance, and aerobic exercise classes.
- Group education classes on falls prevention, exercise, medication safety, home safety, and safe footwear, walkers, and canes.

We created this guide because the older adults in our group classes requested written information on these topics. We strongly encourage you to seek more information from your health care provider, local library, or county senior service agency on the specific topics mentioned in this guide that are important to you.

To obtain more information about your county senior service agency, contact the Eldercare locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging, at [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov) or 800-677-1116 (Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. ET). This service links those who need information and assistance with state and local area agencies on aging, and community-based organizations that serve adults age 65 and older, their families, and their caregivers.

## The four most important things you can do to prevent falls are:

1. **Begin a regular exercise program.**
2. **Make your home safer.**
3. **Have your health care provider review your medicines.**
4. **Have your vision checked.**



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# Chapter 1.

## Building Your Exercise Plan

### IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Exercise Is Important for Adults 65+**
- **Choose the Right Exercise Plan for You**
- **Start Exercising and Stay with It**
- **Exercise Should Not Be Painful**
- **Stay Strong with Weights**
- **Include Balance in Your Exercise Plan**
- **Exercising in Group Classes**
- **Resources for Exercising at Home**
- **Are You Ready to Exercise?**
- **Your Exercise Plan**

### Exercise Is Important for Adults 65+

As we get older, doing regular strength, balance, and flexibility exercises protects our health and independence, and helps prevent falls. Regular exercise is a great way to relieve stress, sleep better, get more energy, and grow stronger.

Making exercise a regular habit takes motivation, commitment, and effort. It's okay if you can only exercise one or two times a week at first.

### Choose the Right Exercise Plan for You

Always talk to your health care provider about what kinds of exercise are best for you and about specific exercise instructions, especially if new health problems occur.

To reduce falls, healthy older adults are encouraged to do strength, balance, and flexibility exercises three times a week and aerobic activities three to five times per week.

It's often easier to make exercise a habit if you have an exercise buddy or attend a class—experiment to find what works for you. If some exercises cause pain, talk to your exercise instructor and your health care provider.

**If you have musculoskeletal health problems** (back problems, arthritis, fibromyalgia, or injury), ask your health care provider for a physical therapy referral for evaluation and exercise instructions. Medicare covers this.

**If you have a heart or lung problem**, ask your health care provider for a cardiac or pulmonary rehabilitation referral to learn about exercise programs that are safe for you—many hospitals have outpatient rehabilitation programs.

You can learn how to exercise safely with most health conditions by working with your health care provider and by reading about your health conditions in expert-written health books, magazine articles, and Internet websites.

Use our **Are You Ready to Exercise?** quiz at the end of this chapter to evaluate yourself.

### Start Exercising and Stay with It

Think of exercise and physical activity as fun and healthy. Make daily physical activity a routine habit, just like meals and medications. It's the best "health insurance" for keeping yourself healthy, active, and independent. Use the **Your Exercise Plan** form at the end of this chapter to create the plan that's right for you.

- Think about it, talk about it with others, and then **make a plan**.
- **Identify your best time(s) of day** to exercise: morning, afternoon, or evening.
- **Identify the best place(s)** for you to exercise: home, neighborhood, senior center, community group, gym, etc.
- **Identify the best activities** for you, such as walking, swimming, biking, dancing, or exercise classes. Think about physical activities you enjoyed as a child, teenager, and young adult. How can you incorporate those activities into your life now?

- Put exercise on your schedule and **make it a priority**: walk the dog, dance, swim, etc.
- **Find others** who are interested in exercising—or are already exercising—to help you stay motivated.
- Talk about exercise with your friends and family. Find ways to **use exercise as a social activity** with them in addition to eating out, shopping, movies, etc.
- **Set personal goals** for the short term (daily, weekly) and long term (monthly, seasonally, yearly).
- **Start slowly**, progress slowly, be consistent, and plan ahead. It takes about a month to make exercise a new habit.
- Keep a record and **track your progress** (make an exercise calendar, journal, etc).
- **Be realistic about relapses**—it's normal to get off-schedule sometimes. Identify and understand the reason (health change, stressful event, schedule conflict, travel, change in season, etc.).
- Be easy on yourself. **Don't give up**—make a plan to start again!

## Common Excuses

- **Fear due to health problems**
- **Lack of interest in exercise**
- **Don't know how to get started**
- **Feeling overwhelmed**
- **Don't want to exercise alone; don't know anyone to exercise with**
- **Limited time, money, or transportation**
- **No safe or convenient place to exercise**

## for Not Exercising

### Exercise Should Not Be Painful

**Exercise should not cause pain.** Always listen to your body to know how long to exercise, how hard to exercise, and how many repetitions to do. If any new pain lasts more than one or two weeks, talk with your instructor and your doctor.

If you feel pain when you use weights, use less weight or stop. If you feel pain from an exercise class, talk with your instructor and your doctor. If the pain continues or increases, you may need a gentler form of regular exercise. There are many types of exercise available and it's worth it to find the one that's right for you.

### Stay Strong with Weights

As we grow older, our muscles become thinner and weaker with age. The good news is that we can build and maintain muscle size and strength with strengthening exercises—exercises that use weights. There are several types of exercise weights: hand weights, strap-on ankle and wrist weights, and weight machines.

It's important to use weights regularly (at least 15 minutes, two or three times a week) for your arms, legs, and abdominal muscles to build and maintain your overall muscle strength, which helps your balance, flexibility, and walking ability, and helps prevent falls.

If you have never exercised with weights before, take the time to learn what type(s) of weights are best for you, and how to use them safely on a regular basis. You can get training from a fitness instructor, a trainer at a fitness center, or a physical therapist (with a referral from your health care provider). You can also get information from your local library or the resources listed in this chapter.

### Include Balance in Your Exercise Plan

Balance is an important part of everyday activities, such as walking, getting out of a chair, getting dressed, leaning over to pick up a grandchild, or reaching up to put dishes or groceries onto shelves. Balance problems can reduce your independence in daily life activities, and lead to falls and a fear of falling. The good news is that exercise can significantly improve your balance and reduce your risk for falls.

Your balance is a system of parts that work together. The balance system involves three main parts:

1. your sensory systems (vision, inner ear, and sense of touch in your skin, muscles, and joints), which provide information about your body's position and movement in your environment;
2. your brain's ability to process this information;
3. your muscles and joints, which provide the flexibility, strength, and endurance to coordinate the movements required to safely maintain your balance.

To improve your balance, start doing balance exercises at least two or three times per week. Some of these exercises can be practiced at any time, as long as you have something sturdy (like a kitchen counter) to hold onto:

- Stand heel-to-toe. Put your heel in front of the toes of your other foot each time you take a step. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch.
- Walk heel-to-toe. Position your feet as you did for standing heel-to-toe, but walk forward so that your heel almost touches the toes.
- Stand on one foot (while washing dishes, brushing your teeth, waiting in line at the grocery store or at the bus stop, etc.). Change feet.

- Stand up and sit down without using your hands.
- March in place, slowly lifting each knee up as high as you can.

You can also protect your balance by:

- Protecting your vision with vision exams at least every two years.
- Scheduling a hearing test at least every two years if you have any hearing loss.
- Doing regular muscle strengthening exercises at least two or three times a week with arm and leg weights, exercise classes that use weights, or weight machines at fitness centers. You can also lift weights at home.
- If you have hearing loss that can be treated with hearing aids, learn as much as you can about how to best adjust and use them. Wear hearing aids in both ears if your doctor or audiologist advises it, because this helps improve your balance.

### Exercising in Group Classes

Group exercise classes are often more fun than exercising alone. They provide extra motivation from other people, more friends, and more support to keep exercising. If an exercise is difficult or painful, an instructor is available to help. You can often find group exercise classes at senior and community centers, YMCAs, parks and recreation facilities, churches, indoor malls, and community colleges.



### Resources for Exercising at Home

Exercising at home can be very convenient. No travel is required, and the schedule is up to you. These resources can help you exercise safely on your own:

- **Exercise: A Guide from the National Institute on Aging** (free)

120-page exercise guide with exercise diagrams

**To order:** Call 800-222-2225 or download from [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov).

Video of the NIA Exercise Guide:

Call 800-222-2225 for cost and availability.

- **AARP's Physical Activities Workbook** (first copy free, extra copies \$1 each)

**To order:** Call 888-687-2277 (888-OUR-AARP).

- **AARP's Step Up to Better Health**

Walking program guide with progress log forms and a step counter (pedometer)  
Program free; pedometer \$9

**To order:** Call 800-861-0168 or visit <http://aarp.com/walking>.

- **Sit and Be Fit video series** (prices vary by title)  
Videotapes for general chair and stretching/toning exercises, and for exercising with health conditions such as arthritis, COPD, stroke, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, and Parkinson's  
**To order:** Call 509-448-9438 for a catalog or visit [www.sitandbefit.org](http://www.sitandbefit.org).

- **Exercise and Your Arthritis** (free brochure, \$20 annual membership)  
24-page brochure from the Arthritis Foundation  
**To order:** Call 800-568-4045 or visit [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org).

You can borrow exercise tapes from the library to figure out which one is right for you.

Another free option is the excellent television show *Sit and Be Fit*. Perfect for exercising at home—in a chair or on the couch—this 30-minute program airs on many PBS television stations Monday through Friday mornings.

For general exercise and health information, you can also contact AARP (888-687-2277 or [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)) or the Arthritis Foundation (800-568-4045 or [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)).

## The Five Stages of Exercise

1. I am not exercising now, and I don't want to start!
2. I am not exercising now, but I am thinking of starting soon.
3. I am not exercising now, but I will start this month.
4. I am exercising now.
5. I have been exercising for the past six months.



Where Are You



## Are You Ready to Exercise?

The purpose of this quiz is to help you decide whether it's safe for you to start an exercise program, or to return to exercise after a health-related absence.

### Section 1. Rate Your Health

Please answer these questions first:

1. Has your doctor or other health care professional told you **NOT** to exercise, or told you that you must restrict your activity?  Yes  No
2. Is **PAIN** preventing you from exercising?  Yes  No
3. If you answered **YES** to question 2, please circle the number that describes your pain on a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (severe pain):  
 0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
*No pain* *Medium pain* *Severe pain*
4. If you answered **YES** to question 2, did you rate your pain at 5 or higher?  Yes  No

**If you answered YES to ANY of the questions in Section 1, you may not be ready to start or return to an exercise program. Please discuss exercise with your doctor.**

**If you answered NO to ALL of the questions in Section 1, please go to Section 2.**

### Section 2. Rate Your Abilities

Can your body do the following activities?

5. Can you dress and bathe/shower without the help of another person?  Yes  No
6. Can you prepare or obtain your own meals?  Yes  No
7. Can you do your usual household chores? (such as cleaning, laundry, gardening)  Yes  No
8. Can you use the telephone? (including looking up numbers, dialing, and answering)  Yes  No
9. Can you do your own errands and shopping?  Yes  No

**If you answered YES to AT LEAST THREE of the questions in Section 2, please go to Section 3.**

**If you answered NO to AT LEAST THREE of the questions in Section 2 because of your health, you may not be ready to start or return to an exercise program. Please discuss exercise with your doctor.**

### Section 3. Rate Your Strength and Walking Ability

Please answer these last questions:

- 10. Can you walk without the help of another person? (It's okay to use a walker or cane.)  Yes  No
- 11. Can you get up from a chair that doesn't have arms without the help of another person? (It's okay to use a walker or cane.)  Yes  No
- 12. Can you drive or arrange your own transportation when needed?  Yes  No
- 13. Can you leave your home for one hour or more for an activity other than a doctor's appointment? (This includes social activities like visiting friends, going to a movie or restaurant, or shopping.)  Yes  No

**If you answered YES to ALL of the questions in Section 3**, it is safe for you start or return to regular exercise, at your own pace.

**If you answered NO to ANY of the questions in Section 3**, you may not be ready to start or return to a regular exercise program yet. Please talk with your doctor about what kinds of exercise you can do to get stronger safely.



## Your Exercise Plan

### Reasons Why You Should Exercise

List the benefits you would like to receive from exercising. Try to think of at least three.

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### Types of Physical Activity You're Doing Now

Activity	How Much Time (minutes)	How Often
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Based on this, do you meet the Surgeon General's recommendations to be physically active for 30 minutes a day, at least 10 minutes at a time, on at least five days of the week?

Yes     No

### Reasons Why You Sometimes Can't Exercise

List all of the possible reasons why you sometimes can't (or don't) exercise as much as you should.

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### Types of Exercise You Want to Do

List all of the exercises you enjoy or would like to try, and are healthy enough to do.

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**Places Where You Can Exercise**

List all of the possible places where you can exercise, including your home.

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**People You Can Talk with to Get Motivated and Stay Motivated**

List any family, friends, neighbors, health care professionals, etc., who might be helpful.

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**People You Could Exercise With**

List all of the people who might be interested in exercising with you.

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**Other Information You Need to Exercise**

List any questions you have about the physical activities you want to do (health, exercise, locations, etc.).

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**Places Where You Can Get the Information You Need**

List all of the possible places where you might be able to get this information, such as the library, Internet, health care provider, senior center, etc.

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**Your Exercise Goal(s)**

Daily: \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly: \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Exercise Plan**

Based on how you answered these questions, what's your exercise plan?

<b>Activity</b>	<b>How Much Time (minutes)</b>	<b>How Often</b>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**TIP:**  
Use your calendar to schedule your exercise plan, and find ways to reward yourself for reaching your goals!

# Chapter 2.

## Understanding Your Health Issues and Exercise

### IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Timing Is Everything**
- **Returning to Exercise After a Break**
- **Exercising After an Illness**
- **Exercising After a Cold or Flu**
- **Exercising After an Injury**
- **Exercising After Surgery**
- **Maintaining Your Eye and Ear Health**
- **Protecting Yourself from Osteoporosis**
- **Medicare Has You Covered**

### Timing Is Everything

It's important to discuss exercise with your doctor, especially if you're being treated for a health condition. Exercising too soon after a health problem can cause setbacks, but waiting too long can make it harder to get back on schedule. The more you know about how and when to exercise, the easier it will be for you to stay active and independent for life.

You can help prevent falls and stay active and independent by asking your doctor for a physical therapy referral and evaluation:

- if you are having ANY trouble walking due to medications or a balance, back, hip, knee, ankle, or foot problem; or
- if you are told to start using a cane or walker.

Medicare will cover physical therapy consultations, evaluation, treatment, and walker, cane, or crutch training if ordered by a health care provider.

Don't overlook the basics of staying healthy: eat well, drink lots of water, get enough sleep, try to limit and manage stress, and stay involved with people and interests you enjoy.

### Returning to Exercise After a Break

If you've been away from your exercise routine for more than a week, starting exercise again as soon as possible can help you stay strong, healthy, and independent. If your absence was due to a medical condition, talking to your health care provider can help you decide how and when to safely return to exercise. You can also use our **Are You Ready to Exercise?** quiz at the end of Chapter 1 to evaluate yourself.

Resume exercising at your own pace—don't try to keep up with everyone else. It takes time to build up strength. It's okay to start with one or two times a week at first.

The longer you've been away, the more effort it takes to get back on schedule. The easiest way to get back to your exercise routine is to “just do it”! You can regain and maintain your strength if you exercise at least twice a week.

Be patient and don't give up. The worst thing that can happen after a break is never going back to exercise.

### Exercising After an Illness

Illness is an energy drainer—recovering uses up a lot of energy, especially if it involves being in a hospital or nursing facility. It can take six to eight weeks (or more) to recover from a medical illness or a flare-up of a medical condition. If your illness required medical care, it's best to talk with your doctor about when to return to exercise—coming back too soon can be unsafe.

It takes time to get back into your exercise routine—start slowly. You can build up your strength by finding ways to be more physically active at home: take walks, go shopping, clean the house, or do some easy, gentle exercises. When you're ready, you can ease into your exercise routine as you build your strength.

### Exercising After a Cold or Flu

The **symptoms of a cold** are cough, stuffy nose, and no fever. When you get a cold, it's a good idea to put your exercise routine on hold until all of your symptoms are gone and your strength has returned. Recovering from a cold can take one to two weeks or more.

The flu is a virus and it is very contagious. The **symptoms of the flu** are a fever of 100° to 104° F, fatigue, muscle aches, joint pain, loss of appetite, headache, and cough. When you get the flu, it's a good idea to put your exercise routine on hold until all symptoms are gone and your strength has returned. Be patient—recovering from the flu can take up to six to eight weeks.

### Exercising After an Injury

If you have an injury that requires medical care, talk to your doctor about when to return to exercise. An injury to a muscle, bone, or joint can take six to eight weeks or longer to heal. Skin injuries can take four weeks or longer to heal.

Use your level of pain as a guide to what your body can handle and be ready to adapt. When you first return to your exercise routine, you may have to change an exercise to make it work for you, stop an exercise early, or do the exercise from a sitting position.

### Exercising After Surgery

Always talk with your doctor about when to return to exercise after surgery. Recovering from surgery often takes at least six to eight weeks and returning too early can cause serious problems or setbacks.

Be patient with yourself as you build up your strength. You may have to change an exercise to make it work for you, stop an exercise early, or do the exercise from a sitting position.

### Maintaining Your Eye and Ear Health

Your vision and hearing play a vital role in keeping your balance fine-tuned and preventing falls. Have

your vision tested at least every two years—more often if you have eye problems.

The three most common eye conditions in older adults are cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration. All of these conditions can develop slowly and gradually without symptoms until vision is impaired.

- A **cataract** is the thickening of the eye lens due to aging which causes gradual sight loss.
- **Glaucoma** is an increase in pressure inside the eye that causes gradual sight loss.
- **Macular degeneration** is the gradual loss of central vision.

**Reduced depth perception** due to bifocals, reading glasses, low lighting, and some eye conditions can cause falls. Reduced depth perception makes it difficult to accurately judge walkway changes like curbs, steps, and uneven ground, and can affect driving skills. In addition, a loss of depth perception makes it difficult to see objects in areas of shadow, low lighting, nighttime darkness, or excessive brightness.

## Exercise Wisely

- **Don't try to keep up with everyone else. It's always best to exercise at your own pace.**
- **Listen to your body and know your limits.**
- **Remember that it takes time to build and regain strength.**
- **It's okay to change or stop an exercise.**
- **Stop or reduce using weights if they cause any pain.**
- **When in doubt, talk to your instructor or doctor so that you can learn how to keep exercising safely.**
- **Commitment and a positive attitude help, too.**

Have your hearing checked by a licensed audiologist every two years—especially if your family or friends tell you that you have a hearing problem! If the audiologist says that you should use hearing aids, learn as much as you can about them. There are many different types and it takes at least a few weeks of regular daily use to get used to using them comfortably.

### Protecting Yourself from Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a major cause of fractures for people age 50 and older. It's a condition in which bone mass is lost and the bones become very fragile and break easily. The symptoms of osteoporosis include fractures, loss of height (more than one inch), a change in posture, and/or back pain.

If you're at risk for osteoporosis, getting tested and treated can help you stay active and independent. You're at risk if you:

- get a fracture after age 50; or
- have a personal or family history of fractures after age 50; or
- are a white or Asian thin, small-boned, postmenopausal woman; or
- smoke or drink a lot of alcohol.

If you're concerned about whether or not you have osteoporosis, discuss this with your doctor. Osteoporosis screening is done with bone density tests. Whole-body tests like the DEXA scan are best if you are at risk for osteoporosis.

The good news is that osteoporosis can be prevented—and treated—with weight-bearing, strength-training exercises and calcium with vitamin D. Treatment can also include prescription medications.

### Medicare Has You Covered

Many people don't realize how much Medicare can help them with their goals of staying active and independent. At the time of publication, Medicare coverage includes:

- **Professional treatment of foot problems and foot care** for diabetes and other medical conditions (covered by Medicare and Medicare supplements).
- **Therapeutic footwear and inserts (orthotics)**, if prescribed by a doctor.
- **New purchases, repairs, and replacements of assistive devices** are covered with a doctor's prescription under "durable medical equipment" by Medicare Part B under the Original Medicare Plan, if the store accepts Medicare assignment. If you have a Medicare+Choice Plan, check the plan to get details about your durable medical equipment coverage.
- **Vision screening and care** by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.
- **Hearing screening and care** by an ear, nose, and throat doctor or licensed audiologist.
- **Bone density tests** every two years to diagnose or monitor osteoporosis.
- **Osteoporosis screening** by a primary care, family practice, or internal medicine physician, or a rheumatologist.
- A **podiatrist** for foot problems.
- An **orthopedic surgeon** for muscle, ligament, tendon, bone, joint problems.
- A **rheumatologist** for joint pain in two or more different joints or unexplained muscle pain.
- A **neurologist** for balance problems, dizziness.
- A **physical therapist** for walking problems, muscle or joint problems, and walker and cane training.
- An **occupational therapist** for assistive devices to help with daily activities.

# Chapter 3.

## Managing Your Health Care Needs

### IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Use Your Medications Wisely**
- **Beware of Medication Problems**
- **Managing Your Medications**
- **Talk with Your Doctor**
- **Talk with Your Pharmacist**
- **Talk About Your Medication Costs**

#### Use Your Medications Wisely

Four out of five older adults take at least one prescription medication a day, and most take at least two prescriptions a day. Many adults don't realize that aging and new health conditions can change how medications affect them.

Learn as much as you can about your health conditions, medications, and prescription coverage from your doctor, pharmacist, local area agency on aging, public library, and credible Internet websites, such as governments (.gov) or universities (.edu).

Be informed, think it all through, and work together with your health care providers and pharmacist to manage the benefits and risks of your medicines safely.

#### Beware of Medication Problems

**Using medications incorrectly** can cause health problems and a need for more medications, doctors' appointments, and hospital and/or nursing home admissions. Medication problems can happen easily in adults who:

- live alone;
- take more than three medications daily;
- have more than one health care provider prescribe medications;
- have memory or vision problems; and/or
- have difficulty paying for the costs of prescriptions.

**Medication misuse and abuse** can lead to falls, especially with narcotics, alcohol, and medications for sleep problems and anxiety. Pain and/or depression can be treated safely if you work closely with your doctor(s).

**Side effects** can occur hours, days, or weeks after starting a medication. Common medication side effects include:

- dizziness, drowsiness, confusion;
- dry mouth;
- racing or irregular heartbeat;
- constipation or diarrhea;
- upset stomach; and/or
- any other unexplained health symptom.

**Allergic reactions** to medication usually include rash, hives, swelling, or difficulty breathing.

**Medications can also interact** with food, alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, other medical conditions, other drugs, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Older adults who use **four or more prescription medications daily** are at increased risk for falls because of medication interactions that can affect balance or cause drowsiness, dizziness, or weakness. The types of medications known to cause falls in older adults include:

- **Tranquilizers:** medications used for sleep, anxiety, or muscle spasms.
- **Antidepressants:** medications used for depression, sleep, or chronic pain.
- **Antihypertensives:** medications used to control blood pressure or heart rate.
- **Diuretics (water pills):** medications used to treat water retention, high blood pressure, or congestive heart failure.
- **Medications for pain, sleep, anxiety, stress, or depression** are often related to falls because of side effects.

If you are concerned about falls or have had a fall, it's important to review your medications with your doctor and pharmacist to explore whether they may have caused your fall.

### Managing Your Medications

**Prescription medications** are ordered by a licensed health care provider and dispensed by a licensed pharmacist. They may have a generic name and a brand name.

**Over-the-counter medications** are bought without a prescription.

**Vitamins, nutritional supplements, and herbal supplements** are bought without a prescription.

### Medication Safety Rules

**Keep a current, dated list of ALL medications** with you at all times in your purse or wallet. Include ALL prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, pain medicines, vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies, medical conditions, and allergies/previous drug side effects.

**Follow your doctor's instructions** for taking your medicines. Your health care providers expect you to (and assume that you will, unless you tell them otherwise) take the right prescriptions and the right doses at the right times to receive the maximum intended health benefit.

**Be an informed consumer.** Read and keep a copy of your prescription information at home for reference. Read all over-the-counter (OTC) medication labels carefully to learn as much as possible about the correct use, directions, and product information.

**If you take more than one medication daily,** create a system and regular routine for taking your medications. Talk to your pharmacist, look for ideas in the pharmacy, and find the solution that works for you, such as a chart, calendar, or medication organizer. If your medication list or routine is

too complicated, ask your health care provider or pharmacist to help you simplify it.

### Talk with Your Doctor

**Provide a complete medical history** to your health care providers—all medical conditions, illnesses that required a doctor's care, hospitalizations, and surgeries since birth. **EVERYTHING** is important!

**Provide a complete list** of all prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, pain medicines, vitamins, nutritional supplements, herbal remedies, and special diet requirements. Provide a list of all medications that caused side effects or allergic reactions, with a description of the side effect or allergic symptom you had for each drug.

**Tell your health care provider** how you usually use your medications. If you're concerned about medication costs, provide a list of all medications with the cost for each and discuss it—never assume your doctor knows your medication costs!

**Prepare for your appointments** by writing down your current problems and concerns. List ALL symptoms of new health problems—don't leave anything out. Your doctor bases many health decisions on your health history.

**When you receive a new prescription,** ask what it is for and what side effects to expect. If you experience any unexplained symptom or health change, contact your health care provider and your pharmacist to determine if it is medication-related.

**Take notes**—we only remember 25% of what we hear. Ask for as much written information as possible.

**Bring a trusted family member or friend** with you—but make sure it's someone you feel comfortable being completely open with, so that you don't hide information from your health care provider.

If there's anything that you don't understand about what your health care provider is telling you, **keep asking questions until you do understand!**

### Talk with Your Pharmacist

**Get all of your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy** to increase your safety. This allows your pharmacist to identify any potentially dangerous drug interactions. Request large-print labels if you need them, and get as much written information as possible. Check new and refilled medication labels carefully before you leave the pharmacy.

**Ask the right questions** about new prescription and over-the-counter medications:

1. What is the name of the medication and what is it supposed to do?
2. How and when do I take it—and for how long?
3. What food, drinks, other medications, or activities should I avoid while taking this medication?
4. Are there any side effects, and what should I do if they occur?
5. Will this new prescription work safely with the other prescription and non-prescription medicines I'm taking?
6. Is there any written information available about this medicine?
7. What should I do if I miss a dose?
8. What's the best way to store this medication?

### Talk About Your Medication Costs

Many adults don't have prescription coverage. High medication costs can lead to medication decisions that are unsafe or risky. An inability to afford prescriptions often results in increased health problems and hospitalizations.

Many adults don't feel comfortable talking about drug costs with the health care providers who order their prescriptions. If you don't tell your health care providers about your drug cost concerns, they won't know!

Common—and potentially unsafe—cost-cutting decisions that can cause health problems include:

- rotating which prescriptions to fill each month based on cost;
- stretching medications by skipping or reducing scheduled doses;
- stopping medications based on symptoms or lack of symptoms; and/or
- substituting over-the-counter medications for prescriptions.

**NEVER** do ANY of the above without talking with your health care provider or pharmacist **FIRST!**

Be very aware of the risks of obtaining prescription drugs outside of the U.S.—they are not always safe. Always show your doctor and pharmacist any drugs you purchase outside of the U.S. so they can check them for your safety.

## Think Teamwork

When you think “medications,” think **TEAMWORK:**

- **Health care providers who provide your prescriptions (doctor(s), physician assistants, nurse practitioners, hospital staff)**
- **Your pharmacist and pharmacy staff**



# Chapter 4.

## Staying on Your Feet

### IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Build a Stronger Foundation**
- **Keep Your Feet Healthy**
- **Choosing the Best Footwear**
- **Assistive Devices Can Help**
- **What You Need to Know About Canes**
- **What You Need to Know About Walkers**
- **For More Information**

### Build a Stronger Foundation

Making wise choices about foot care, footwear, walkers, and canes makes a big difference in your ability to stay active and independent and avoid falls. When you protect your balance and walking ability, you build a stronger foundation for your healthy life.

### Keep Your Feet Healthy

Many people falsely believe that leg and foot pain is a normal part of aging and live with problems that could be treated. **If you have any foot or leg pain, discuss it with a doctor!**

Your feet are a mirror of your health: arthritis, diabetes, and circulation problems can cause changes in your feet that are often the first sign of these health problems. Untreated foot problems affect posture and walking ability, which affect balance and can cause falls.

- Always see a doctor if you notice these changes in your feet: increased skin dryness, brittle nails, discoloration, or feelings of burning, tingling, cold, or numbness.
- Arthritis can easily develop as the joints in your legs and feet wear out with age. Over half of all adults have arthritis in the hips, knees, or feet.

- Corns, calluses, bunions, ulcers, blisters, warts, weak arches, infections, flat feet, pain, cramping, arthritis problems, nail problems, ingrown toenails, and many other foot conditions can usually be successfully treated and managed with professional care.
- Regular foot care is especially important for diabetics and anyone with a circulation problem, as it can help prevent serious infections that can lead to toe or foot amputation. If you have diabetes, it is very important to work with your doctor to keep your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol close to normal to help prevent diabetes-related foot problems, as well as eye and kidney disease.

Not all serious foot problems cause pain, so it is important to check your feet regularly for cuts, sores, red spots, swelling, and infected toenails (use a mirror, if needed). Make sure to see your doctor right away if a foot cut, sore, blister, or bruise does not begin to heal after two or three days so that it can be treated promptly to prevent infection.

There are over 300 types of foot problems. Any foot problem should be evaluated and treated by your physician or a podiatrist (foot specialist).

### Choosing the Best Footwear

Foot protection, comfort, function, and hygiene should be your priorities in choosing shoes. Poor-fitting shoes cause many foot problems.

Choose safe slippers. Smooth-soled slippers, socks, slip-ons, and bare feet are unsafe and can cause falls. When you buy slippers, look for the word “non-slip” on the package, an enclosed heel (no slip-ons), a tread on the bottom, and a snug fit.

When you buy shoes, try to shop in the afternoon, since feet tend to swell during the day. Your shoe size changes with age, so have both feet measured while standing. Get a proper fit for your largest foot and try on both shoes.

The best shoes should feel snug but not tight, with enough room to wiggle your toes and feel comfortable, sturdy, fully supported, and noticeably cushioned. Use the “pinch test” to choose sport or exercise shoes—if you can pinch the shoe over your last two toes, there’s enough space between your foot and the side of the shoe. Remember, there’s no such thing as “breaking in” shoes.

When you shop for shoes and slippers, look for:

- **Strong arch support**—you should be able to put your hand in the shoe and feel an arch.
- **Plenty of toe room**—the outside of the shoe should be as wide as the widest part of your feet.
- **Enough cushioning** to absorb shock, provide some “give,” and make your feet feel very comfortable.
- **Tread patterns** should be slip-resistant and durable, so that they don’t wear out too quickly. The heel and sole should “grip” to reduce risk of falls from slipping.
- The shoe should **completely enclose your foot** (no open heels or slip-ons).
- **Rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes** are best. Avoid leather soles, because they are slippery.
- **A flat or low-heeled walking base with a broad surface** that contacts the floor.
- **The fit should feel like a firm handshake**—not too tight and not too loose. Lace-up or Velcro-strap shoes should be secured tightly and snugly, or your foot will turn in the shoe and throw you off balance.
- **Ventilation and material that lets the feet “breathe”** to help prevent fungus or other infections.
- **Protection from indoor or outdoor walking surface hazards** that could cause you to trip. Bare feet, socks, sandals, and flip-flops can expose feet to injury-causing hazards.
- **The upper part of your shoe should be made of a soft flexible material** that allows the shoe to bend and conform to the shape of your foot.

If you have a foot condition, ask your podiatrist to suggest other special shoe features you might need. Orthotics can help improve posture, balance, weight distribution, gait, and foot, ankle, knee, hip, and back support.

## Did You Know?

- **Foot problems take longer to heal because the feet are farthest from the heart and have less blood supply than other areas of the body.**
- **Elevating the feet above the level of the heart daily is very important in promoting healing after injury, surgery, or infection and reducing any foot and ankle swelling.**
- **Our feet change with age. We lose the fat padding that protects the toes, the ball of the foot, and the heels. Our skin becomes thinner and drier, and our feet grow bigger by spreading and flattening.**

### Assistive Devices Can Help

“Assistive device” is the health care term for canes, walkers, and other devices designed to help people be independent when health problems interfere with their daily activities. Many adults who would benefit from an assistive device avoid using them due to appearance, denial, embarrassment, cost, lack of information, or because it makes them feel like they’ve lost independence.

Health care professionals view assistive devices as vital tools for helping people with health problems stay safe, active, and independent. Walkers and canes can reduce pain, improve balance and support, and increase the user’s sense of security and physical safety. Hip protectors absorb the impact of a fall and reduce the risk of fracture by shunting

energy away from the hip. Other assistive devices can help with activities of daily living that can become difficult, such as bathing, dressing, meal preparation, and housework.

Pride comes before a fall—if you're having difficulty walking easily and safely, it's better to start using a walker or cane before you have a fall to prevent more serious injuries. If you're recovering from surgery, illness, or injury, you might benefit from temporary use of a walker or cane until you're fully recovered.

Signs that a walker or cane may be needed:

- dizziness;
- can't walk easily or steadily without holding onto furniture;
- frequent falls; and/or
- walking causes bone or joint pain.

Discuss these types of problems with your doctor. If you and your doctor decide that you need to use a walker or cane, ask for physical therapy sessions at the hospital, a physical therapy clinic, or exercises to do at home. Learn how to use the cane or walker correctly and get written instructions, too. Getting comfortable and confident with any assistive device takes professional instruction by a physical therapist, time, and lots of practice at home.

### What You Need to Know About Canes

Canes support 20% of your weight and are useful when you're recovering from an injury or surgery, or if a health condition makes you feel unsteady, painful, or weak when you walk. Canes can provide a sense of security if you are concerned about falling or becoming fatigued.

### Types of Canes

- **Adjustable or folding metal canes** can collapse if too much weight is put on them.
- **Wooden canes** can be cut to the correct size, if needed.

- **Metal canes** must be selected in the correct size.
- **Three- or four-pronged canes** give more stability and support, and can free your hand because they stand alone. But you have to walk slowly and place the prongs flat on the ground with each step to provide stability. Proper use and training is important to prevent tripping over this type of cane.

Some canes have a small folding seat attached.

### Fitting a Cane Correctly

The height of the cane is the most important feature—it should be measured by a physical therapist or occupational therapist. If you have not had the height of your cane measured by a healthcare professional, your cane might be too high or too low, which can cause posture or balance problems, or lead to a fall.

To find the correct cane height, let your arm hang by your side and then locate the crease on the inside of your wrist. The top of the cane handle should not be higher or lower than this.

### Types of Handgrips

Many types of handgrips are available, such as a U-shape, ball, or T-shape, and padded or unpadded. Try all of the handgrips at a medical supply store or with a physical therapist to see which is most comfortable for your hand and easiest to use.

### The Cane Tip

The cane tip is the cheapest part of the cane to replace, but it has the most wear and tear. It should be a non-slip rubber suction type. The tip is the first thing to wear out and the last thing people notice—when it's worn through, it will slip and could cause a fall or scratch flooring.

### Using a Cane

If you have a leg problem, the cane should be held in the hand opposite to the affected leg. Practice marching like a soldier with the cane and the injured leg touching the ground at the same time.

This can be difficult if you have to hold the cane in your non-dominant hand (your left hand if you're right-handed or vice versa), but you must get used to using it this way, or you may become unbalanced or put too much weight on the affected leg.

If you don't have a leg problem, just hold the cane in your dominant hand (your right hand if you're right-handed or vice versa).

### Going Up and Down Stairs

An easy way to remember this is “up with the good leg, down with the bad leg.”

- **When you're going up stairs**, the cane and “bad” foot stay down, the “good” leg goes up first, followed by the “bad” foot and the cane.
- **When you're going down stairs**, the cane and “bad” foot go down first, followed by the “good” foot.

### What You Need to Know About Walkers

Walkers support 50% of your weight, and are often safer than canes when recovering after illness, injury, or surgery. They are helpful for people with balance or walking problems.

### Types of Walkers

Walkers are usually made of aluminum or other lightweight material and can be customized with special hand or arm rests, if needed. The three most common types are two-wheeled, four-wheeled, or wheelless.

Two-wheeled walkers provide the best balance and safety for those recovering from a surgery or illness, using a walker for pain relief, or experiencing moderate to severe balance problems.

Four-wheeled walkers with or without seats are popular, but are usually best for those who have only mild balance problems. They can provide a sense of security and help increase endurance. Four-wheeled walkers are not appropriate for

all health problems, especially during initial recovery from surgery or injury or illness. They can move out of your control very easily if you try to put your full weight on them—even if they have brakes.

### Fitting a Walker Correctly

Hold the walker slightly in front of you while standing still. When you hold the handles, your elbows should be flexed 30 to 40 degrees and you should not need to bend or lean forward.



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### Types of Handgrips

Try out different types of handgrips (or forearm rests, if needed) at a medical supply store. Half of your weight is now pressing on your hands, so the grip should be padded with foam. If the grip doesn't have enough padding, you can tape sponges or washcloths to the handles.

### Check the Tips Regularly

Check the rubber tips on the bottom of each walker leg every week or two. Replace them when they wear out, or they will slip and could cause a fall or scratch the floor.

## Walker Safety

**It's very important to have walker fitting and training by a physical therapist to make sure you're using the size and type of walker that's best for you, and to learn how to use it safely to prevent falls.**

### Using a Walker

Move the walker forward approximately half an arm's length while leaning forward and place your weight on your hands, then step with your "bad" leg first, then your "good" leg. **The most common mistake is moving the walker too far forward**—this can cause you to lose your balance and fall.

Walkers are not recommended on stairs, escalators, or revolving doors.

### Going Up and Down Steps

**When you're going up**, start with your weight on your "good" leg, lift your walker up onto the curb, then hop up onto the curb with your "good" leg.

**When you're going down**, lower the walker down from the curb, then hop down with your "good" leg.

### For More Information

Medical supply stores are the best source for assistive devices and assistive device information. They can bill Medicare directly if you have a doctor's prescription. Pharmacies have a limited selection of foot care and assistive devices.

You can also check the selection of other types of personal assistive devices for eating, dressing, bathing, etc. in the Sammons Preston Enrichments Catalog (800-323-5547 or [www.sammonspreston.com](http://www.sammonspreston.com)).

You can get non-slip footwear and foot care products from:

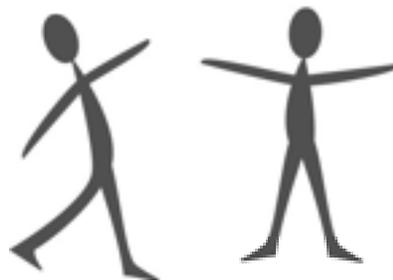
- Therapeutic shoe stores
- Online retailers (Use the browser on your computer to find non-slip footwear.)

Foot care information is available from:

- **American Diabetes Association:**  
800-DIABETES or [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)
- **National Diabetes Education Program:**  
800-438-5383 or [www.ndep.nig.gov](http://www.ndep.nig.gov)
- **American Podiatric Medical Association:**  
800-FOOTCARE or [www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org)

The National Osteoporosis Foundation ([www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org)) has osteoporosis information.

For Medicare information, call 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227) or visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Booklets on durable medical equipment and preventive services are available on request.



# Chapter 5.

## Keeping Yourself Independent Through Home Safety

### IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Make Your Home Work for You**
- **Create Your Home Safety Plan**
- **Your Home Safety Checklist**
- **Use Ladders Safely**
- **Stay Independent by Asking for Help**

### Make Your Home Work for You

How we live in our homes changes with each stage of life. In early and middle adulthood, we use our homes to take care of our families. In older adulthood, we use our homes to take care of our own changing needs. Physical aging after the age of 30 gradually changes our vision, muscle strength, balance, and flexibility—which increases our risk for a fall after age 65.

One-third of adults age 65 or older who live in their own homes fall at least once in a year; 50% or more of those age 75 or older will have a fall. About one out of ten falls will result in a serious injury and hospitalization, such as a hip fracture or head injury. Injuries from falls are a major threat to independence.

Most of us don't think about making our homes safer until we have had a fall, a major surgery, or a hospital stay. It's easy to put home safety changes on hold if we're worried about the cost, feeling overwhelmed, or think it's too soon for that.

Living independently means taking care of ourselves and creating a home that will help us feel comfortable and safe. In this chapter, we'll show you how to compare your home to your current state of health and make your home work for you.

### Create Your Home Safety Plan

If you want to feel more confident and secure in your home, check your home for safety and make an improvement plan.

1. Compare your home to the home safety checklist in this chapter.
2. Make a list of what you need to do to improve your home's safety.
3. Prioritize your list. Making changes one at a time is easier than trying to do it all at once.
4. Identify what you can do yourself for free or for very little money:
  - Remove clutter from floor/stairs.
  - Rearrange furniture/cords.
  - Put frequently-used items on lower shelves within easy reach.
  - Place phones within reach of the floor.
  - Replace burned-out light bulbs and install nightlights.
  - Purchase non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips for tub or shower.
5. Identify changes that you may need another person to help with, such as grab bars or repairs.
6. Identify the cost of home repairs or modifications and determine what you can afford.
7. Check with your local area agency on aging (800-677-1116) for senior home repair and modification programs that offer financial assistance, if needed.

## Pet Safety

- **Hold leashes with your fingers, not your wrist—easier to let go if the dog pulls or bolts.**
- **Be aware of where your pets are when you're walking.**

## Your Home Safety Checklist

Compare your home to the items on this list. Note the areas that need improvement to keep your home working for you.

### Lighting

- Light bulbs should be 60–75 watts in all rooms and stairways.
- Replace burned-out bulbs promptly.
- Keep several flashlights in the house and check the batteries regularly.

### Floors and Walkways

- Arrange furniture so that you have plenty of room to walk without obstacles.
- Keep walkways free of cords, furniture, clutter, and other obstacles.
- Remove throw rugs or secure them with double-stick tape or tacks.
- If you have hardwood floors, consider carpets. Hardwood floors have a greater risk of fractures.
- Use non-slip or non-skid floor wax—or none at all.
- Don't "leave it for later." Take care of spills and dropped objects promptly.

### Steps and Stairways

- All stairs and steps should have secure handrails on both sides.
- Check the condition of the stairs for loose carpet, loose steps, or uneven steps.
- Stairways should be well lit with light switches at the top and bottom.
- Keep stairways free of clutter.

### Living Room

- Make sure your furniture is easy for you to get in and out of (knee height or higher is easiest).

- Keep a phone on a low table within reach of the floor.
- Arrange the room to create clear walking spaces.

### Bedroom

- Keep a light/flashlight and a phone within reach of your bed.
- Make sure there are nightlights between your bedroom and bathroom.

### Kitchen

- Keep regularly-used items within comfortable reach.
- Never climb on chairs—only use stepstools with a handlebar on the back.

### Bathrooms

- Put grab bars by the toilet and in the shower or tub to give you extra support.
- Put a non-slip mat or non-slip adhesive strips in the shower or tub to help prevent slips.

### Yards, Outdoor Stairs, and Walkways

- Keep outdoor stairs and walkways well-lit and free of breaks and cracks.
- Make sure there are handrails on both sides of stairs.
- Look out for uneven ground, stones, branches, pets, garden hoses, or tools.
- Factor in the weather—any type of wet or icy walkways can cause slips.

## Stay Safe

- **Clear, dry walkways reduce slips and trips.**
- **Good lighting improves vision and balance.**
- **Stairs with railings on BOTH sides are safest.**
- **Keep items within your reach at waist level.**
- **Wear footwear with a tread to grip the floor.**

### Use Ladders Safely

If you use a ladder (indoors or outdoors), please be safe:

- Check the ladder for loose or broken parts and clean off any mud or liquids.
- Place the ladder on a firm, level, non-slippery surface and set the ladder locks or braces before you climb.
- Be safe and careful when climbing; get someone to hold the ladder and stay with you.
- To keep your balance and avoid falls, don't lean too far to one side and be cautious about pushing, pulling, or leaning back.
- Never sit or step on the top step or bucket shelf—it isn't designed to hold your weight.

### Stay Independent by Asking for Help

If you need help to make your home safe, ask for it. Asking for help is a sign of wisdom and strength. Talk with your **family, friends, and/or health care providers** about your changing needs, even if it's temporary (a short-term medical issue, for example).

Your **local senior services agency** (800-677-1116) has a wealth of information and resources for getting skilled help and/or financial assistance for home repairs or modifications and other needs. They can also provide information and/or financial assistance on chore services and meal delivery services. Veterans and their dependents can check with their **local veterans affairs** center.

If your doctor orders it, **Medicare** covers home health care visits by an RN, physical therapist, occupational therapist, or bath aide if you are housebound due to a health problem or after being discharged from the hospital or a nursing facility. On your doctor's orders, Medicare will also cover outpatient occupational therapist evaluations (home safety and learning new skills for independent living) and physical therapist

evaluations (treatment for musculoskeletal problems due to weakness, injury, arthritis, or surgery).

**Assistive devices** help make everyday home tasks easier to do. Call the Sammons Preston Company (800-323-5547) for a free Enrichments Catalog.

**Home medical alert systems** are very helpful for adults who have frequent falls and/or fear of falls; limited mobility and/or difficulty walking; medication concerns; or medical conditions. They provide immediate help to call police, fire, and specified family members or friends, and are especially helpful for those who live alone. Users report a very high rate of satisfaction.

At the time of publication, three of the available medical alert systems are:

- **ADT Companion Services:** 800-238-9030 or [www.adt.com](http://www.adt.com)
- **Lifeline:** 800-380-3111 or [www.lifelinesys.com](http://www.lifelinesys.com)
- **Link-to-Life:** 888-337-5433 or [www.link-to-life.com](http://www.link-to-life.com)

Most home medical alert services have an installation fee and a monthly monitoring fee. Ask about discounts or financial assistance programs.

## Take It Slow

**Change positions slowly. When you have been lying down for a while, sit up for a few minutes before standing. Taking it slow helps you avoid dizziness or lightheadedness, especially if you are on blood pressure medications.**

## In Case of Emergency: What to Do If You Fall

1. **Try to remain calm. Check yourself for serious injuries, such as bleeding, sprains, strains, dislocations, or fractures. If you are bleeding, apply firm pressure.**
2. **If you think you are injured and someone is nearby, call for help.**
3. **If no one is nearby, try to get up or crawl to a telephone to call for help. There are several ways to get up from a fall, which method is best for you will depend on your health and your injuries.**
  - **Roll and Crawl:** Roll onto your stomach, get up on all fours, crawl to a nearby piece of furniture, place your hands on it, and bring one foot forward—putting it flat on the floor—and stand up.
  - **Shuffle:** If painful knees prevent you from crawling, shuffle on your bottom to a nearby piece of furniture, pull yourself onto your knees, and stand up.
  - **Using Stairs:** Shuffle on your bottom to the stairs, then gradually move up one step at a time until you reach a height that makes it possible for you to stand.

**If you can get up, take a few moments to recover and then call for help.**
4. **If you cannot get up, try to keep warm. Pull any nearby rugs, coats, or blankets over and under you, if possible.**

**FFFFF**

**Please try to practice these techniques before you need them, so that you can be prepared. You can also safeguard yourself by doing a home safety check, placing a telephone on a low stool or shelf you can reach from the floor, and arranging for someone to call or check in on you daily.**

## My Falls-Free Plan

As we grow older, gradual health changes and some medications can cause falls, but many falls can be prevented. Use this to learn what to do to stay active, independent, and falls-free.

Check “Yes” if you experience this (even if only sometimes)	No	Yes	What to do if you checked “Yes”
Have you had <b>any falls in the last six months?</b>			<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your doctor(s) about your falls and/or concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> Show this checklist to your doctor(s) to help understand and treat your risks, and protect yourself from falls.
Do you take <b>four or more</b> prescription or over-the-counter medications daily?			<input type="checkbox"/> Review your medications with your doctor(s) <b>and</b> your pharmacist at each visit, and with each new prescription. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask which of your medications can cause drowsiness, dizziness, or weakness as a side effect. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your doctor about anything that could be a medication side effect or interaction.
Do you have <b>any difficulty walking or standing?</b>			<input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor(s) if you have any pain, aching, soreness, stiffness, weakness, swelling, or numbness in your legs or feet— <b>don’t ignore</b> these types of health problems. <input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor(s) about <b>any</b> difficulty walking to discuss treatment. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor(s) if physical therapy or treatment by a medical specialist would be helpful for your problem.
Do you use a <b>cane, walker, or crutches</b> , or have to hold onto things when you walk?			<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor for training from a physical therapist to learn what type of device is best for you, and how to safely use it.
Do you have to <b>use your arms to be able to stand up from a chair?</b>			<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor for a physical therapy referral to learn exercises to strengthen your leg muscles. <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise at least two or three times a week for 30 min.
Do you ever feel <b>unsteady on your feet, weak, or dizzy?</b>			<input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor, and ask if treatment by a specialist or physical therapist would help improve your condition. <input type="checkbox"/> Review all of your medications with your doctor(s) or pharmacist if you notice <b>any</b> of these conditions.
Has it been <b>more than two years since you had an eye exam?</b>			<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule an eye exam every two years to protect your eyesight and your balance.
Has your <b>hearing gotten worse with age</b> , or do your family or friends say you have a hearing problem?			<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a hearing test every two years. <input type="checkbox"/> If hearing aids are recommended, learn <b>how</b> to use them to help protect and restore your hearing, which helps improve and protect your balance.
Do you usually <b>exercise less than two days a week?</b> (for 30 minutes total each of the days you exercise)			<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor(s) what types of exercise would be good for improving your strength and balance. <input type="checkbox"/> Find some activities that you enjoy and people to exercise with two or three days/week for 30 min.
Do you drink <b>any alcohol</b> daily?			<input type="checkbox"/> Limit your alcohol to one drink per day to avoid falls.
Do you have <b>more than three chronic health conditions?</b> (such as heart or lung problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, etc. Ask your doctor(s) if you are unsure.)			<input type="checkbox"/> See your doctor(s) as often as recommended to keep your health in good condition. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your doctor(s) what you should do to stay healthy and active with your health conditions. <input type="checkbox"/> Report any health changes that cause weakness or illness as soon as possible.

The more “Yes” answers you have, the greater your chance of having a fall.

**Be aware of what can cause falls, and take care of yourself to stay independent and falls-free!**



Injury & Violence Prevention Program  
DOH 341-013 April 2006



**Stay Active  
& Independent  
for Life (SAIL)**

a strength, balance, and fitness class for adults 65+

**Name:**

**Date:**

# **My Fitness Goals**

**Short-term**

**YES!**

1.

2.

3.

**Long-term**

1.

2.

3.



a strength, balance, and fitness class for adults 65+

## Fitness Check Record

Name \_\_\_\_\_

<b><u>8-Foot Up-and-Go</u></b> Stand up, walk around a cone 8 feet away, then back to chair, sit down. How long does it take?	First Check	3 months	6 months	12 months
	Date:			
	Seconds:			

<b><u>Biceps Curl</u></b> Sitting in chair, arm straight down, holding weight, bend elbow to lift weight up and down. How many in 30 seconds?	First Check	3 months	6 months	12 months
	Date:			
	Repetitions:			

<b><u>Chair Stand</u></b> Sit in chair, feet firmly on floor, arms folded across chest. Stand up and sit down. How many in 30 seconds?	First Check	3 months	6 months	12 months
	Date:			
	Stands:			

Why do we do this? Regular Fitness Checks show you how this class is helping you to stay fit. Talk to your instructor about your individual results.



## Fitness Check Record

Name \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b><u>8-Foot Up-and-Go</u></b> Stand up, walk around a cone 8 feet away, then back to chair, sit down. How long does it take?</p>	Continue Fitness Check at Six-Month Intervals		
	Date:		
	Seconds:		

<p><b><u>Biceps Curl</u></b> Sitting in chair, arm straight down, holding weight, bend elbow to lift weight up and down. How many in 30 seconds?</p>	Continue Fitness Check at Six-Month Intervals		
	Date:		
	Repetitions:		

<p><b><u>Chair Stand</u></b> Sit in chair, feet firmly on floor, arms folded across chest. Stand up and sit down. How many in 30 seconds?</p>	Continue Fitness Check at Six-Month Intervals		
	Date:		
	Stands:		

Why do we do this? Regular Fitness Checks show you how this class is helping you to stay fit. Talk to your instructor about your individual results.



# Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL)

**A Strength, Balance, and Fitness  
Class for Adults 65+**

## **Class Exercise Guide**

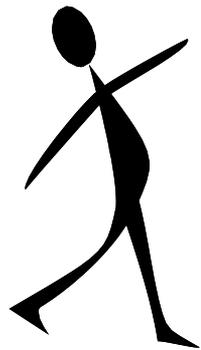




DOH 341-015 December 2008

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY 800-833-6388).

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# **Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL)**

**A Strength, Balance, and Fitness  
Class for Adults 65+**

## **Class Exercise Guide**

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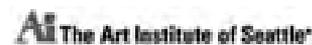
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## Introduction

Exercise that improves strength, balance, and fitness is the single most important activity that adults can do to stay active and independent, and to reduce the chances of having a fall. Falls among older adults are the leading cause of injury hospitalization in Washington State and the U.S. Many falls in adults age 65 and older are caused by gradual physical changes in muscle strength, balance, vision, and walking ability due to aging, along with health changes related to chronic health conditions, and medication side effects and interactions.

Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) is a strength, balance, and fitness class for adults 65 and older. This SAIL Class Exercise Guide was developed as a result of the Washington State Department of Health's Senior Falls Prevention Study, which was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is intended for participants in the SAIL exercise classes who want to exercise at home after they have learned how to do the exercises correctly in a class. This guide includes the most important exercises in the SAIL exercise program. You can also use this guide to review your questions about exercise with your exercise instructor and/or health care provider. A companion guide, *Stay Active & Independent for Life: An Information Guide for Adults 65+*, is available through the Washington State Department of Health, Publication 341-013.

This Exercise Guide is not intended for starting a home exercise program, without first learning the exercises in a SAIL exercise class. Resources for home exercises are listed on page 62 of this guide, as well as in the References on page 63.

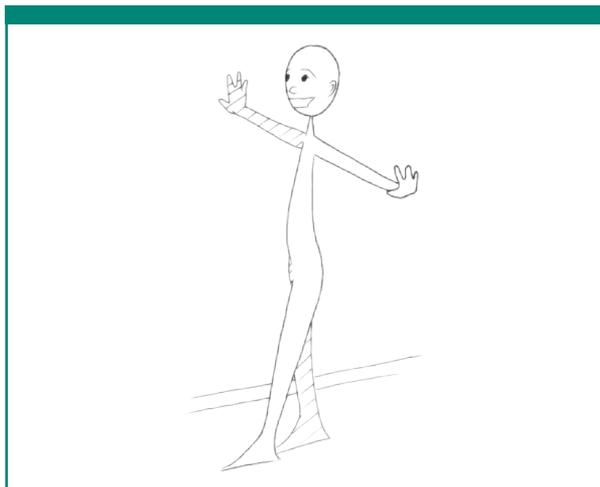
The exercises in the SAIL exercise program can help improve strength, balance, and fitness if done regularly, at least two times per week. It is important that you consult with your health care provider(s) if you have any health concerns related to exercise before starting an exercise program. You should also talk with your health care provider if you have any new health changes or concerns at any time after starting an exercise program. Please read the first two chapters carefully. Remember, this book cannot replace the advice of a health care provider who knows you personally. The authors and publishers assume no liability in connection with the exercises in this publication.

The four most important things you can do to prevent falls are:

- 1. Begin a regular exercise program.**
- 2. Make your home safer.**
- 3. Have your health care provider review your medicines.**
- 4. Have your vision checked.**

# Part I. Getting Ready to Exercise

## Chapter 1. Building Your Exercise Plan



### Exercise Is Important for Adults 65+

As we get older, doing regular strength, balance, and flexibility exercises protects our health and independence, and helps prevent falls. Regular exercise is a great way to relieve stress, sleep better, get more energy, and grow stronger.

Making exercise a regular habit takes motivation, commitment, and effort. It's okay if you can only exercise one or two times a week at first.

### Choose the Right Exercise Plan for You

Always talk to your health care provider about what kinds of exercise are best for you and about specific exercise instructions, especially if new health problems occur.

To reduce falls, healthy older adults are encouraged to do strength, balance, and flexibility exercises three times a week and aerobic activities three to five times per week.

It's often easier to make exercise a habit if you have an exercise buddy or attend a class—experiment to find what works for you. If some exercises cause pain, talk to your exercise instructor and your health care provider.

If you have musculoskeletal health problems (back problems, arthritis, fibromyalgia, or injury), ask your health care provider for a physical therapy referral for evaluation and exercise instructions. Medicare covers this.

If you have a heart or lung problem, ask your health care provider for a cardiac or pulmonary rehabilitation referral to learn about exercise programs that are safe for you—many hospitals have outpatient rehabilitation programs.

You can learn how to exercise safely with most health conditions by working with your health care provider and by reading about your health conditions in expert-written health books, magazine articles, and Internet websites.

Use our Are You Ready to Start or Return to Exercise? quiz at the end of this chapter to evaluate yourself.

### Start Exercising and Stay with It

Think of exercise and physical activity as fun and healthy. Make daily physical activity a routine habit, just like meals and medications. It's the best "health insurance" for keeping yourself healthy,

active, and independent. Use the Your Exercise Plan form at the end of this chapter to create the plan that's right for you.

- Think about it, talk about it with others, and then make a plan.
- Identify your best time(s) of day to exercise: morning, afternoon, or evening.
- Identify the best place(s) for you to exercise: home, neighborhood, senior center, community group, gym, etc.
- Identify the best activities for you, such as walking, swimming, biking, dancing, or exercise classes. Think about physical activities you enjoyed as a child, teenager, and young adult. How can you incorporate those activities into your life now?
- Put exercise on your schedule and make it a priority: walk the dog, dance, swim, etc.
- Find others who are interested in exercising—or are already exercising—to help you stay motivated.
- Talk about exercise with your friends and family. Find ways to use exercise as a social activity with them in addition to eating out, shopping, movies, etc.
- Set personal goals for the short term (daily, weekly) and long term (monthly, seasonally, yearly).
- Start slowly, progress slowly, be consistent, and plan ahead. It takes about a month to make exercise a new habit.
- Keep a record and track your progress (make an exercise calendar, journal, etc).
- Be realistic about relapses— it's normal to get off-schedule sometimes. Identify and understand the reason (health change, stressful event, schedule conflict, travel, change in season, etc.).
- Be easy on yourself. Don't give up—make a plan to start again!

## Common Excuses

- **Fear due to health problems**
- **Lack of interest in exercise**
- **Don't know how to get started**
- **Feeling overwhelmed**
- **Don't want to exercise alone; don't know anyone to exercise with**
- **Limited time, money, or transportation**
- **No safe or convenient place to exercise**

## for Not Exercising

### Exercise Should Not Be Painful

Exercise should not cause pain. Always listen to your body to know how long to exercise, how hard to exercise, and how many repetitions to do. If any new pain lasts more than one or two weeks, talk with your instructor and your doctor.

If you feel pain when you use weights, use less weight or stop. If you feel pain from an exercise class, talk with your instructor and your doctor. If the pain continues or increases, you may need a gentler form of regular exercise. There are many types of exercise available and it's worth it to find the one that's right for you.

### Stay Strong with Weights

As we grow older, our muscles become thinner and weaker with age. The good news is that we can build and maintain muscle size and strength with strengthening exercises—exercises that use weights. There are several types of exercise weights: hand weights, strap-on ankle and wrist weights, and weight machines.

It's important to use weights regularly (at least 15 minutes, two or three times a week) for your arms, legs, and abdominal muscles to build and maintain your overall muscle strength, which helps your balance, flexibility, and walking ability, and helps prevent falls.

If you have never exercised with weights before, take the time to learn what type(s) of weights are best for you, and how to use them safely on a regular basis. You can get training from a fitness

instructor, a trainer at a fitness center, or a physical therapist (with a referral from your health care provider). You can also get information from your local library or the resources listed in this chapter.

### Include Balance in Your Exercise Plan

Balance is an important part of everyday activities, such as walking, getting out of a chair, getting dressed, leaning over to pick up a grandchild, or reaching up to put dishes or groceries onto shelves. Balance problems can reduce your independence in daily life activities, and lead to falls and a fear of falling. The good news is that exercise can significantly improve your balance and reduce your risk for falls.

Your balance is a system of parts that work together. The balance system involves three main parts:

1. your sensory systems (vision, inner ear, and sense of touch in your skin, muscles, and joints), which provide information about your body's position and movement in your environment;
2. your brain's ability to process this information;
3. your muscles and joints, which provide the flexibility, strength, and endurance to coordinate the movements required to safely maintain your balance.

To improve your balance, start doing balance exercises at least two or three times per week. Some of these exercises can be practiced at any time, as long

as you have something sturdy (like a kitchen counter) to hold onto:

- Stand heel-to-toe. Put your heel in front of the toes of your other foot each time you take a step. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch.
- Walk heel-to-toe. Position your feet as you did for standing heel-to-toe, but walk forward so that your heel almost touches the toes.
- Stand on one foot (while washing dishes, brushing your teeth, waiting in line at the grocery store or at the bus stop, etc.). Change feet.
- Stand up and sit down without using your hands.
- March in place, slowly lifting each knee up as high as you can.

You can also protect your balance by:

- Protecting your vision with vision exams at least every two years.
- Scheduling a hearing test at least every two years if you have any hearing loss.
- Doing regular muscle strengthening exercises at least two or three times a week with arm and leg weights, exercise classes that use weights, or weight machines at fitness centers. You can also lift weights at home.
- If you have hearing loss that can be treated with hearing aids, learn as much as you can about how to best adjust and use them. Wear hearing aids in both ears if your doctor or audiologist advises it, because this helps improve your balance.

### Exercising in Group Classes

Group exercise classes are often more fun than exercising alone. They provide extra motivation from other people, more friends, and more support to keep exercising. If an exercise is difficult or painful, an instructor is available to help. You can often find group exercise classes at senior and community centers, YMCAs, parks and recreation facilities, churches, indoor malls, and community colleges.

## The Five Stages of Exercise

1. I am not exercising now, and I don't want to start!
2. I am not exercising now, but I am thinking of starting soon.
3. I am not exercising now, but I will start this month.
4. I am exercising now.
5. I have been exercising for the past six months.

Where Are You ?



## Are You Ready to Start or Return to Exercise?

The purpose of this quiz is to help you decide whether it's safe for you to start an exercise program, or to return to exercise after a health-related absence.

---

### Section 1. Rate Your Health

Please answer these questions first:

1. Has your doctor or other health care professional told you NOT to exercise, or told you that you must restrict your activity?  Yes  No
2. Is PAIN preventing you from exercising?  Yes  No
3. If you answered YES to question 2, please circle the number that describes your pain on a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (severe pain):  
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
*No pain* *Medium pain* *Severe pain*
4. If you answered YES to question 2, did you rate your pain at 5 or higher?  Yes  No

If you answered YES to ANY of the questions in Section 1, you may not be ready to start or return to an exercise program. Please discuss exercise with your doctor.

If you answered NO to ALL of the questions in Section 1, please go to Section 2.

### Section 2. Rate Your Abilities

Can your body do the following activities?

5. Can you dress and bathe/shower without the help of another person?  Yes  No
6. Can you prepare or obtain your own meals?  Yes  No
7. Can you do your usual household chores? (such as cleaning, laundry, gardening)  Yes  No
8. Can you use the telephone? (including looking up numbers, dialing, and answering)  Yes  No

9. Can you do your own errands and shopping?  Yes  No

If you answered YES to AT LEAST THREE of the questions in Section 2, please go to Section 3.

If you answered NO to AT LEAST THREE of the questions in Section 2 because of your health, you may not be ready to start or return to an exercise program. Please discuss exercise with your doctor.

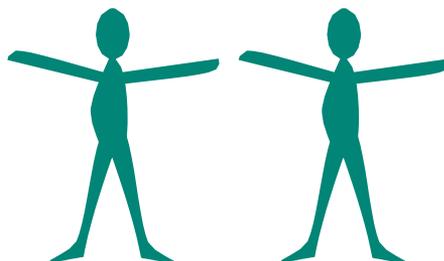
### Section 3. Rate Your Strength and Walking Ability

Please answer these last questions:

10. Can you walk without the help of another person?  
(It's okay to use a walker or cane.)  Yes  No
11. Can you get up from a chair that doesn't have arms without the help of another person? (It's okay to use a walker or cane.)  Yes  No
12. Can you drive or arrange your own transportation when needed?  Yes  No
13. Can you leave your home for one hour or more for an activity other than a doctor's appointment?  
(This includes social activities like visiting friends, going to a movie or restaurant, or shopping.)  Yes  No

If you answered YES to ALL of the questions in Section 3, it is safe for you start or return to regular exercise, at your own pace.

If you answered NO to ANY of the questions in Section 3, you may not be ready to start or return to a regular exercise program yet. Please talk with your doctor about what kinds of exercise you can do to get stronger safely.



## Exercise Benefits and Barriers

Knowing the benefits of exercise can help you stay motivated to continue exercising. Knowing your personal barriers to exercise can help you overcome them. This page lists some common benefits and barriers.

### Benefits of Starting or Continuing to Exercise

- Increase your energy
- Feel stronger
- Feel more confident
- Improve your walking
- Improve your flexibility
- Reduce your risk of falling
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Improve your self-image
- Sleep better
- Make new friends—have fun!

### Barriers to Starting or Returning to Exercise

- Too busy
- Don't know where to go
- Can't afford to pay
- No transportation
- Injury
- Illness
- Medical condition(s)
- Overweight
- Afraid to exercise
- No one to exercise with

**My top 3 reasons for exercising:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**My top 3 reasons for not exercising:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Your Exercise Plan

Types of Physical Activity You're Doing Now

Activity	How Much Time (minutes)	How Often
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Based on this, do you meet the Surgeon General's recommendations to be physically active for 30 minutes a day, at least 10 minutes at a time, on at least five days of the week?

Yes    No

Types of Exercise You Want to Do

List all of the exercises you enjoy or would like to try, and are healthy enough to do.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Places Where You Can Exercise

List all of the possible places where you can exercise, including your home.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TIP: Use your calendar to schedule your exercise plan, and find ways to reward yourself for reaching your goals!**

### People You Can Talk with to Get Motivated and Stay Motivated

List any family, friends, neighbors, health care professionals, etc., who might be helpful.

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### People You Could Exercise With

List all of the people who might be interested in exercising with you.

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### Other Information You Need to Exercise

List any questions you have about the physical activities you want to do (health, exercise, locations, etc.).

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### Places Where You Can Get the Information You Need

List all of the possible places where you might be able to get this information, such as the library, Internet, health care provider, senior center, etc.

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Your Exercise Goal (s)

Daily: \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly: \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly: \_\_\_\_\_

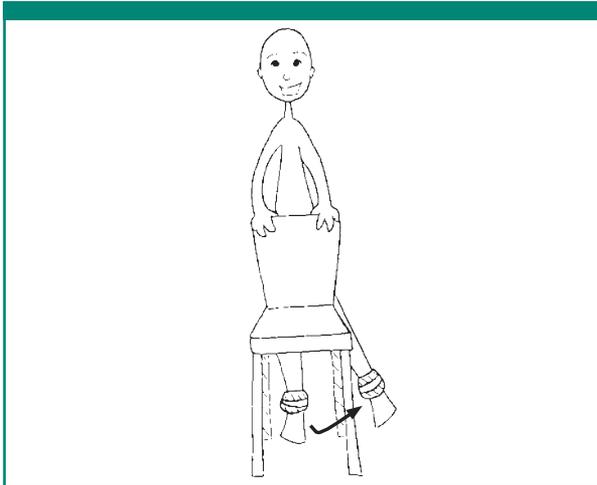
Your Exercise Plan

Based on how you answered these questions, what's your exercise plan?

Activity	How Much Time (minutes)	How Often
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## Chapter 2.

# Understanding Your Health Issues and Exercise



### Timing Is Everything

It's important to discuss exercise with your doctor, especially if you're being treated for a health condition. Exercising too soon after a health problem can cause setbacks, but waiting too long can make it harder to get back on schedule. The more you know about how and when to exercise, the easier it will be for you to stay active and independent for life.

You can help prevent falls and stay active and independent by asking your doctor for a physical therapy referral and evaluation:

- if you are having ANY trouble walking due to medications or a balance, back, hip, knee, ankle, or foot problem; or
- if you are told to start using a cane or walker.

Medicare will cover physical therapy consultations, evaluation, treatment, and walker, cane, or crutch training if ordered by a health care provider.

Don't overlook the basics of staying healthy: eat well, drink lots of water, get enough sleep, try to limit and manage stress, and stay involved with people and interests you enjoy.

### Returning to Exercise After a Break

If you've been away from your exercise routine for more than a week, starting exercise again as soon as possible can help you stay strong, healthy, and independent. If your absence was due to a medical condition, talking to your health care provider can help you decide how and when to safely return to exercise. You can also use our Are You Ready to Start or Return to Exercise? quiz at the end of Chapter 1 to evaluate yourself.

Resume exercising at your own pace—don't try to keep up with everyone else. It takes time to build up strength. It's okay to start with one or two times a week at first.

The longer you've been away, the more effort it takes to get back on schedule. The easiest way to get back to your exercise routine is to "just do it"! You can regain and maintain your strength if you exercise at least twice a week.

Be patient and don't give up. The worst thing that can happen after a break is never going back to exercise.

### Exercising After an Illness

Illness is an energy drainer—recovering uses up a lot of energy, especially if it

involves being in a hospital or nursing facility. It can take six to eight weeks (or more) to recover from a medical illness or a flare-up of a medical condition. If your illness required medical care, it's best to talk with your doctor about when to return to exercise—coming back too soon can be unsafe.

It takes time to get back into your exercise routine—start slowly. You can build up your strength by finding ways to be more physically active at home: take walks, go shopping, clean the house, or do some easy, gentle exercises. When you're ready, you can ease into your exercise routine as you build your strength.

### Exercising After a Cold or Flu

The symptoms of a cold are cough, stuffy nose, and no fever. When you get a cold, it's a good idea to put your exercise routine on hold until all of your symptoms are gone and your strength has returned. Recovering from a cold can take one to two weeks or more.

The flu is a virus and it is very contagious. The symptoms of the flu are a fever of 100° to 104°F, fatigue, muscle aches, joint pain, loss of appetite, headache, and cough. When you get the flu, it's a good idea to put your exercise routine on hold until all symptoms are gone and your strength has returned. Be patient—recovering from the flu can take up to six to eight weeks.

### Exercising After an Injury

If you have an injury that requires medical care, talk to your doctor about

when to return to exercise. An injury to a muscle, bone, or joint can take six to eight weeks or longer to heal. Skin injuries can take four weeks or longer to heal.

Use your level of pain as a guide to what your body can handle and be ready to adapt. When you first return to your exercise routine, you may have to change an exercise to make it work for you, stop an exercise early, or do the exercise from a sitting position.

### Exercising After Surgery

Always talk with your doctor about when to return to exercise after surgery. Recovering from surgery often takes at least six to eight weeks and returning too early can cause serious problems or setbacks.

Be patient with yourself as you build up your strength. You may have to change

## Exercise Wisely

- **Don't try to keep up with everyone else. It's always best to exercise at your own pace.**
- **Listen to your body and know your limits.**
- **Remember that it takes time to build and regain strength.**
- **It's okay to change or stop an exercise.**
- **Stop or reduce using weights if they cause any pain.**
- **When in doubt, talk to your instructor or doctor so that you can learn how to keep exercising safely.**
- **Commitment and a positive attitude help, too.**

an exercise to make it work for you, stop an exercise early, or do the exercise from a sitting position.

### Maintaining Your Eye and Ear Health

Your vision and hearing play a vital role in keeping your balance fine-tuned and preventing falls. Have your vision tested at least every two years—more often if you have eye problems.

The three most common eye conditions in older adults are cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration. All of these conditions can develop slowly and gradually without symptoms until vision is impaired.

- A cataract is the thickening of the eye lens due to aging which causes gradual sight loss.
- Glaucoma is an increase in pressure inside the eye that causes gradual sight loss.
- Macular degeneration is the gradual loss of central vision.

Reduced depth perception due to bifocals, reading glasses, low lighting, and some eye conditions can cause falls. Reduced depth perception makes it difficult to accurately judge walkway changes like curbs, steps, and uneven ground, and can affect driving skills. In addition, a loss of depth perception makes it difficult to see objects in areas of shadow, low lighting, nighttime darkness, or excessive brightness.

Have your hearing checked by a licensed audiologist every two years—especially if your family or friends tell you that you have a hearing problem! If the audiologist says that you should use

hearing aids, learn as much as you can about them. There are many different types and it takes at least a few weeks of regular daily use to get used to using them comfortably.

### Protecting Yourself from Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a major cause of fractures for people age 50 and older. It's a condition in which bone mass is lost and the bones become very fragile and break easily. The symptoms of osteoporosis include fractures, loss of height (more than one inch), a change in posture, and/or back pain.

If you're at risk for osteoporosis, getting tested and treated can help you stay active and independent. You're at risk if you:

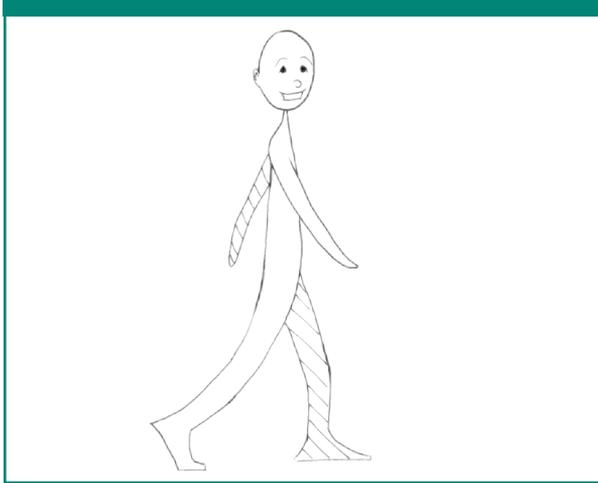
- get a fracture after age 50; or
- have a personal or family history of fractures after age 50; or
- are a white or Asian thin, small-boned, post-menopausal woman; or
- smoke or drink a lot of alcohol.

If you're concerned about whether or not you have osteoporosis, discuss this with your doctor. Osteoporosis screening is done with bone density tests. Whole-body tests like the DEXA scan are best if you are at risk for osteoporosis.

The good news is that osteoporosis can be prevented—and treated—with weight-bearing, strength-training exercises and calcium with vitamin D. Treatment can also include prescription medications.

## Part II. The Exercises

### Chapter 3. Starting Your Routine



#### The Importance of Regular Exercise

Any exercise routine for older adults should include the following types of exercise:

- warm-ups
- aerobics
- balance
- strength
- stretching

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Surgeon General, and the American Heart Association all recommend a minimum of 30 to 60 minutes of exercise per day.

The Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL) exercises are designed to meet the CDC's and Surgeon General's recommendations for physical activity and healthy aging.

#### The Importance of Warm-Up Exercises

Warm-up exercises are the gentle exercises that you do at the beginning of an exercise routine. Warm-up exercises prepare the muscles for more vigorous exercise and reduce the risk of injury.

Always warm up before exercising. The easiest warm-up is a five-minute walk. If you are unable to walk, or the weather is bad, try some of the exercises that your instructor teaches at the beginning of each class. If you have access to music, play some favorite tunes to help keep you going!

You can easily fill five minutes with any combination of the following warm-up exercises.

If you are standing, you can warm up by:

- marching in place
- stepping from side to side (step-touch)
- lifting alternate knees
- lifting foot up behind you, knee bent
- taking 4 steps forward and 4 steps back
- circling your arms
- raising arms above your head and bringing one hand down to touch the opposite knee

If you are sitting, you can warm up by:

- lifting alternate knees
- lifting alternate legs out to side
- lifting alternate feet, straightening knees
- turning your head left, then right
- shrugging your shoulders
- circling your arms (one at a time, then both together)
- raising arms above your head and touching the opposite knee

### The Importance of Aerobic Exercises

Aerobic exercise increases your heart rate and breathing rate for an extended period of time. Aerobic exercise is sometimes called “cardiovascular exercise” because it makes your heart work harder.

After you warm up, aim for 15 to 20 minutes of aerobics. If your warm-up was 5 minutes of walking, you could simply walk for another 15 to 20 minutes. Try swinging your arms—this will help increase your heart rate.

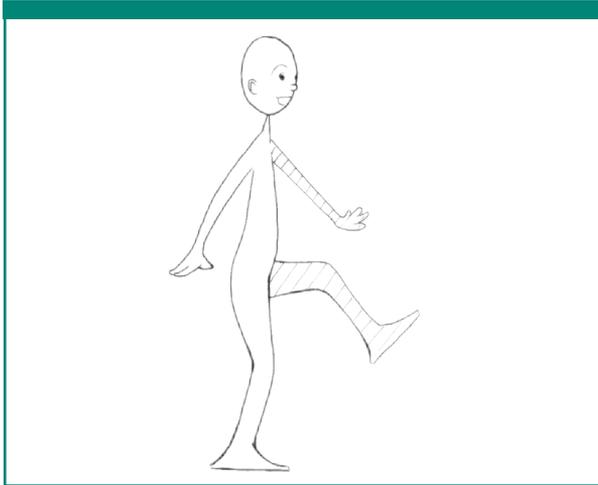
Remember—you are aiming to increase your heart rate, so try combining leg exercises with arm exercises (e.g., lift alternate knees while lifting arms up and down, step from side to side while swinging arms, and/or march in place while circling arms).

Now that you have warmed up and have done some aerobic exercise, you are ready for the balance, strength, and stretching exercises.



# Chapter 4.

## Balance Exercises



### The Importance of Balance

This chapter shows you how to do important balance exercises. Maintaining good balance is vital to keeping yourself independent. Some reasons to maintain good balance:

- We need good balance for almost everything we do: walking, reaching, standing up, bending, and using stairs and step stools.
- Our balance can decline as we grow older, but we can improve and maintain good balance with balance exercises.
- Good balance decreases our risk of falling.

Many systems in your body contribute to good balance, including:

- musculoskeletal system (muscles and bones)
- central nervous system (brain and spinal cord)
- peripheral nervous system (touch/sensation)

- balance organ (located in the inner ear)

The balance exercises in this chapter are designed to give all of these systems a good workout.

### Exercises 1–10

#### Balance Exercises—Moving

1. Walking with Head Turns
2. Stepping Over Objects
3. Heel-to-Toe Walk
4. Turning a Circle
5. Sit to Stand

#### Balance Exercises—Standing Still or Sitting

- 6a. Shifting Your Weight—Standing Version
- 6b. Shifting Your Weight—Sitting Version
7. Twisting Side to Side
- 8a. Heel-to-Toe Stand—Without Support
- 8b. Heel-to-Toe Stand—With Support
9. Reaching Forward and to Side
10. Standing on One Leg

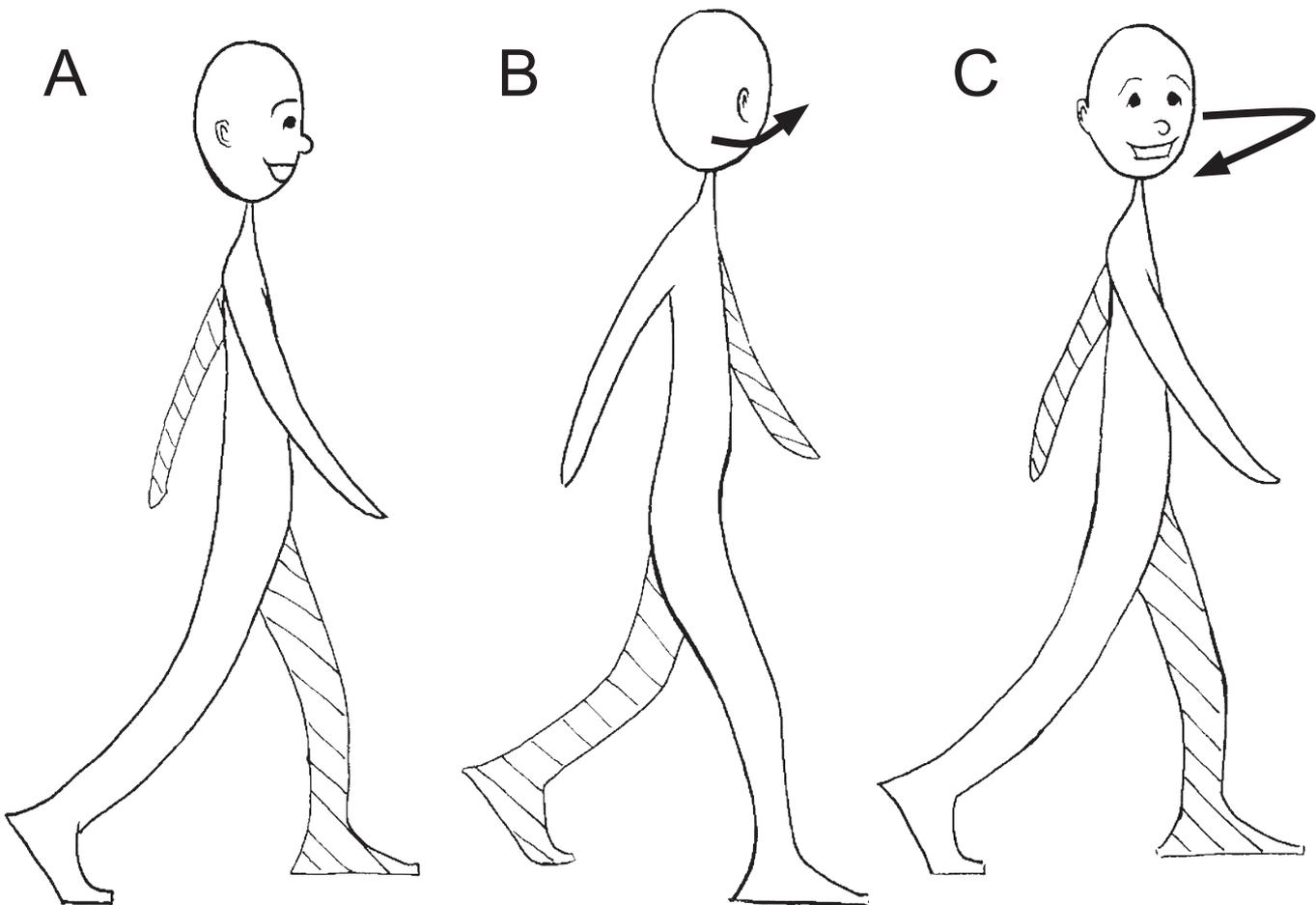


## Balance Exercises—Moving

### 1. Walking with Head Turns

Purpose: To improve balance while walking.

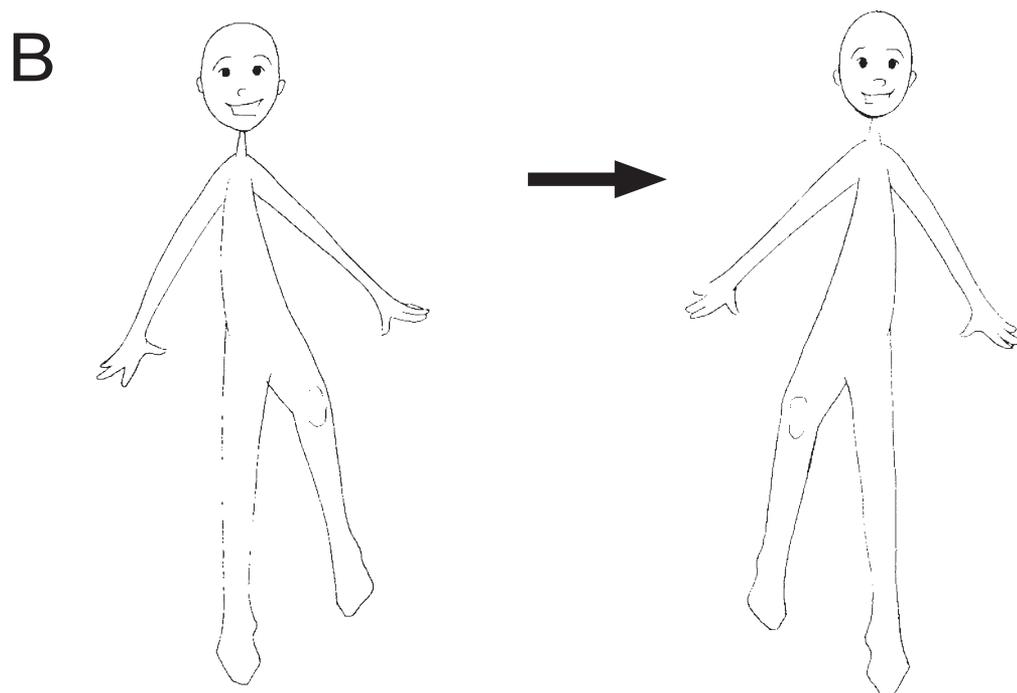
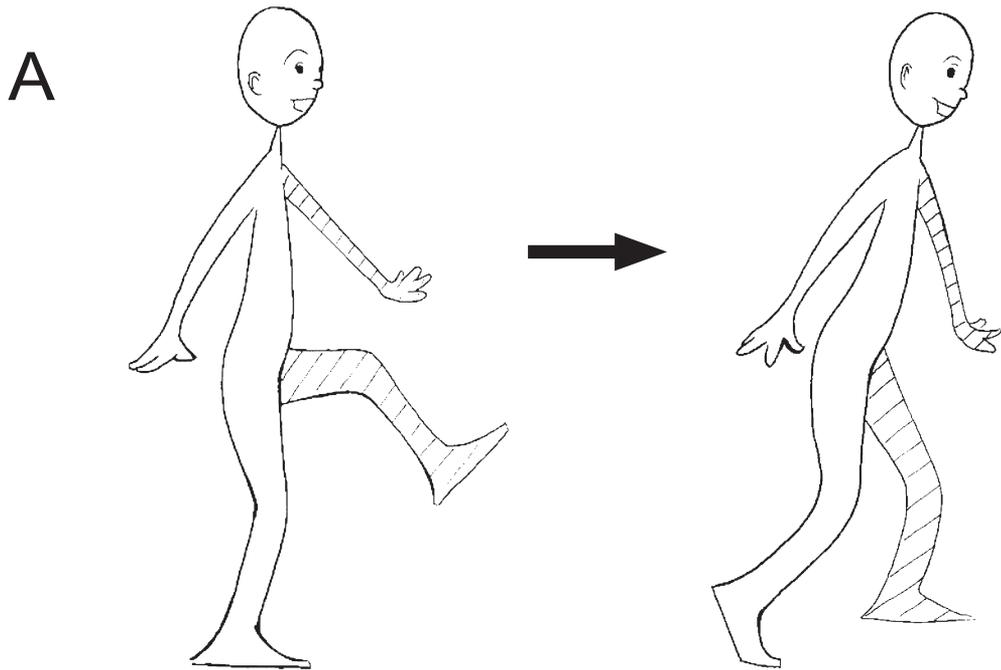
1. Begin walking at your normal speed (**see Figure A**). Make sure that there is nothing in front of you that could cause you to trip.
2. After three steps, turn your head and look left while continuing to walk straight ahead (**see Figure B**).
3. After three steps, turn your head and look right while continuing to walk straight ahead (**see Figure C**).
4. Repeat.



## 2. Stepping Over Objects

Purpose: To improve balance while walking.

1. Step over an imaginary object 5 to 8 times, moving forward (**see Figure A**).
2. Repeat, moving side to side (**see Figure B**).

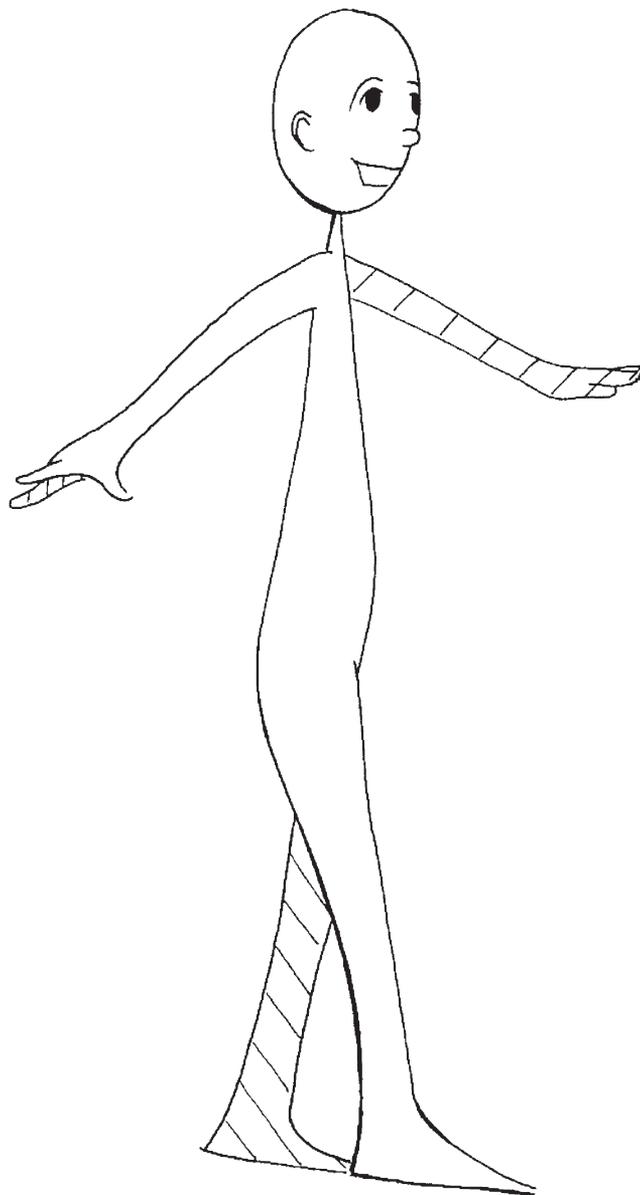


### 3. Heel-to-Toe Walk

Purpose: To improve balance.

1. Walk forward by placing the heel of the front foot directly in front of the toes of the back foot (**see Figure A**). If this is difficult, use a wall or a table to guide you. If this is easy, you can do it with your eyes closed. Make sure that there is nothing in front of you that could cause you to trip.

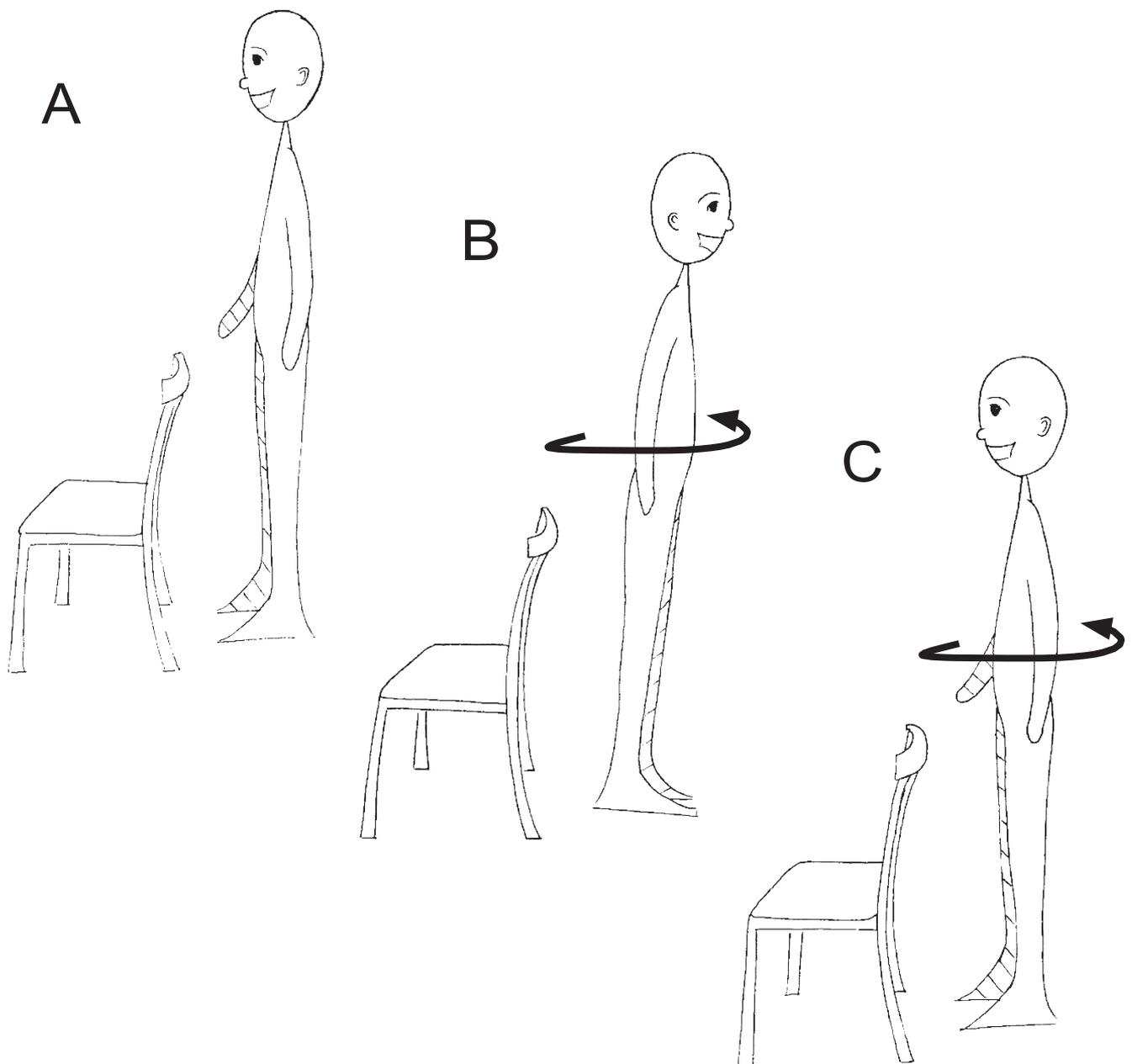
A



#### 4. Turning a Circle

Purpose: To improve balance when turning.

1. Stand behind a chair, feet shoulder width apart. Use chair for balance as needed.
2. Staying in one spot, turn one full circle using small steps to turn your body 360 degrees (**see Figures A, B, and C**).
3. Repeat in opposite direction.

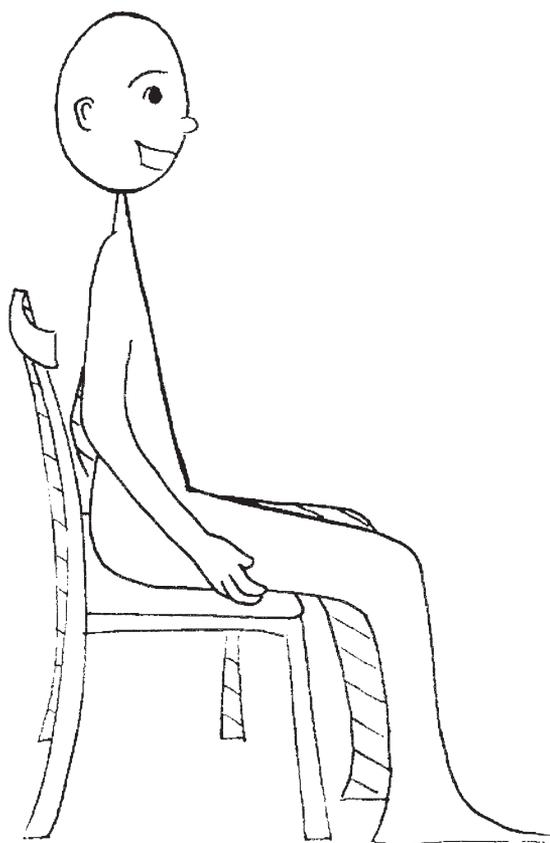


## 5. Sit to Stand

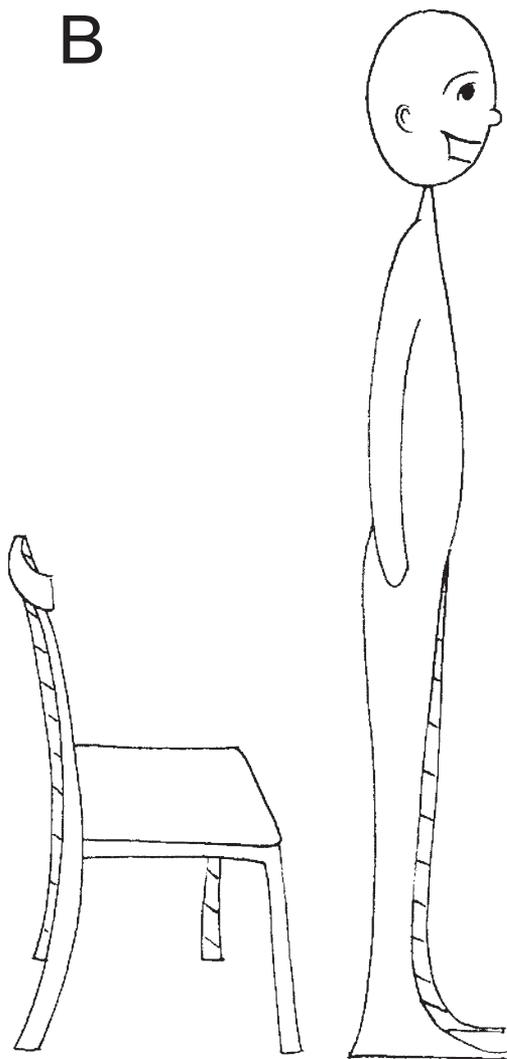
Purpose: To strengthen leg muscles and improve balance.

1. Begin in a seated position toward the front of the chair with your feet flat on the ground (shoulder width apart) and arms at your sides (**see Figure A**).
2. Stand up (**see Figure B**).
3. Repeat 5 to 8 times. For variety, you can begin with feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart.

A



B

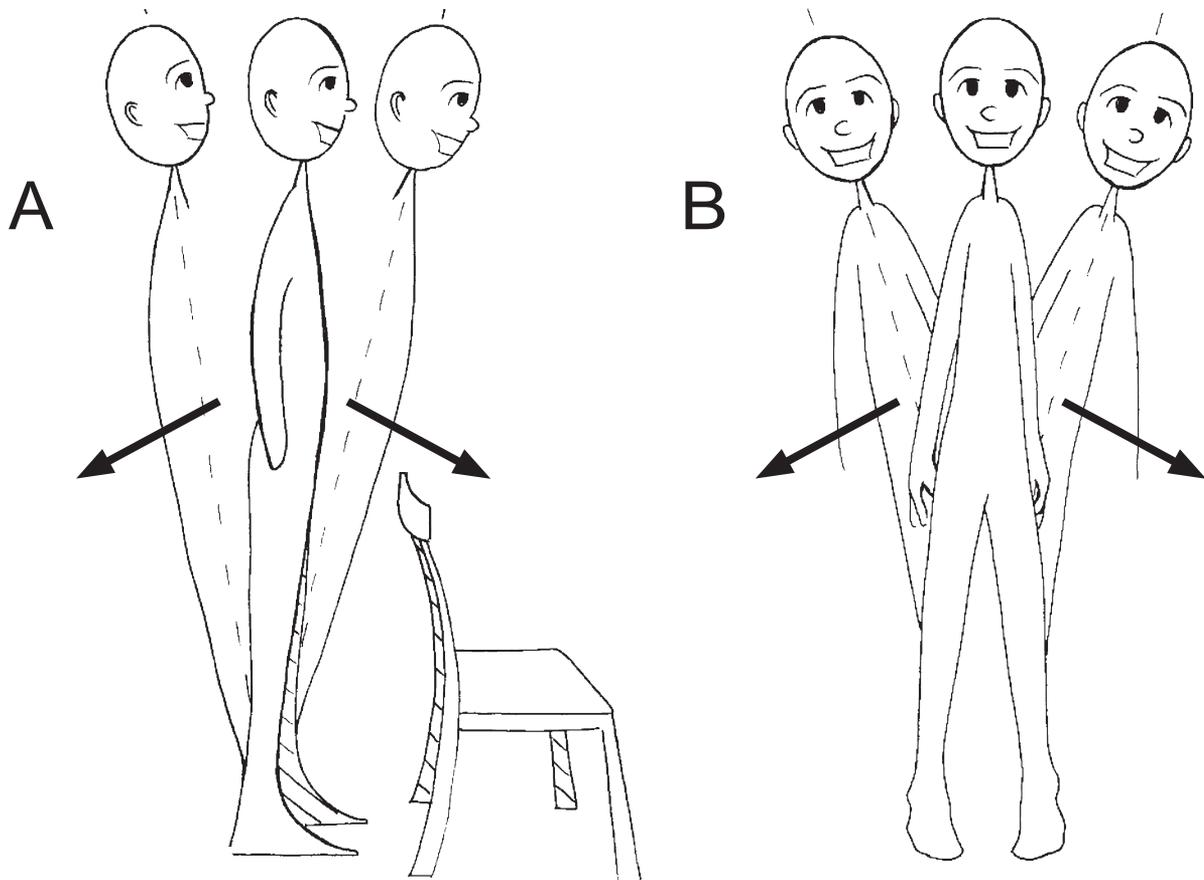


## Balance Exercises—Standing Still or Sitting

### 6a. Shifting Your Weight—Standing Version

Purpose: To improve standing balance.

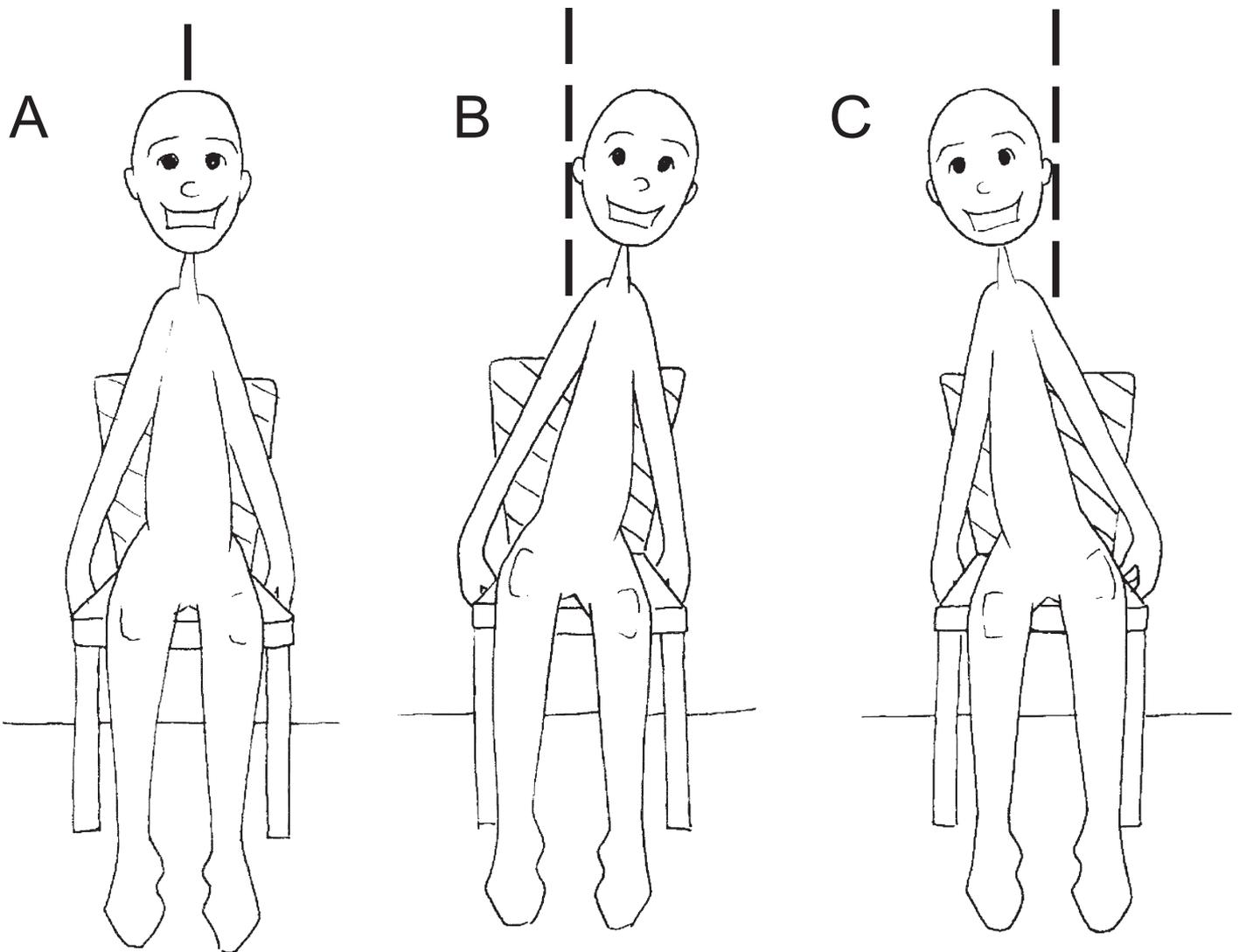
1. Stand behind a chair for support (if necessary) with feet shoulder width apart and your weight distributed equally on both feet. Arms should be relaxed and at your sides with your head facing forward.
2. Slowly shift your weight forward and backward (**see Figure A**). Do not move very far. Do not bend at your hips. All movement should be at your ankles.
3. Shift your weight from side to side (**see Figure B**), placing more weight first to your right side, then to your left. Do not bend at the hips.
4. Repeat.



### 6b. Shifting Your Weight—Sitting Version

Purpose: To improve standing balance.

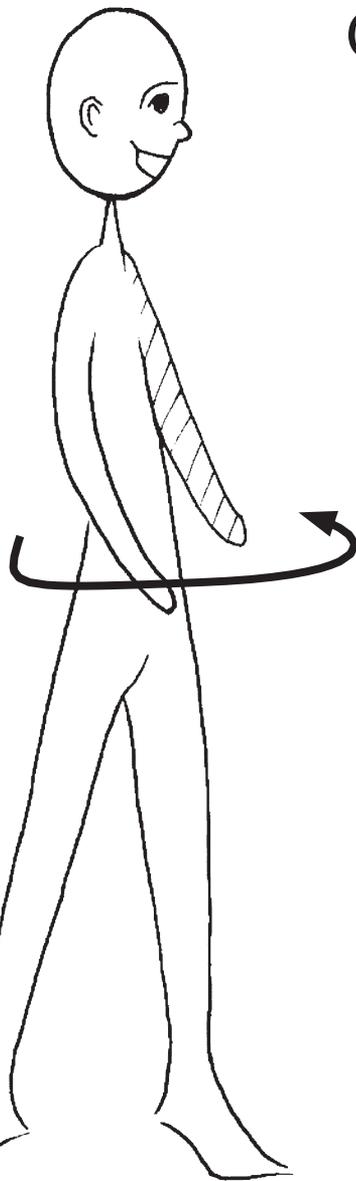
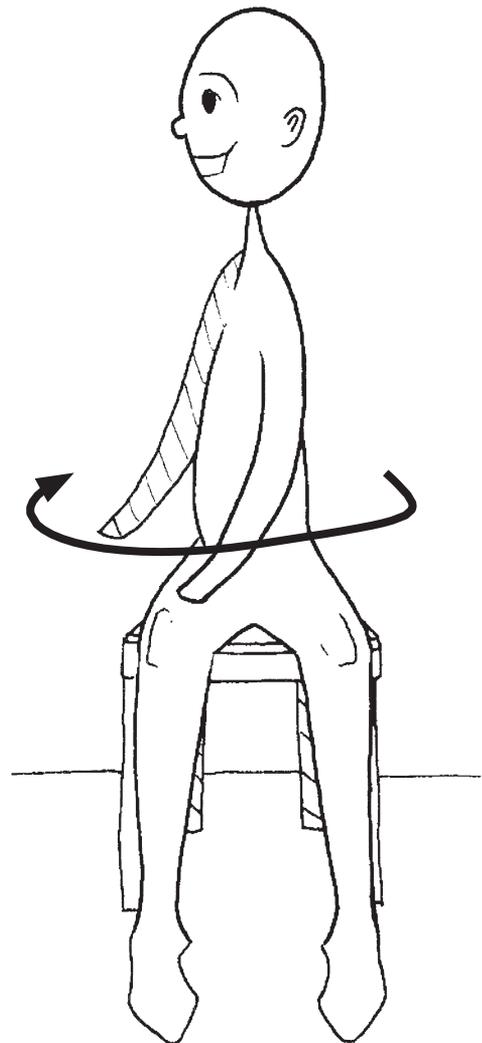
1. Start sitting toward the front of the chair with your feet flat on the ground (**see Figure A**).
2. Shift your weight to the side over one hip, raising the other hip off the chair (**see Figure B**). Hold for a count of 3.
3. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each hip (**see Figure C**).



## 7. Twisting Side to Side

Purpose: To improve balance.

1. Sit or stand. Hold your hands in front of you at waist level. Using your arms as your guide, gently twist from side to side while keeping your feet still (see Figures A and B).

**A****OR****B**

### 8a. Heel-to-Toe Stand—Without Support

Purpose: To improve standing balance.

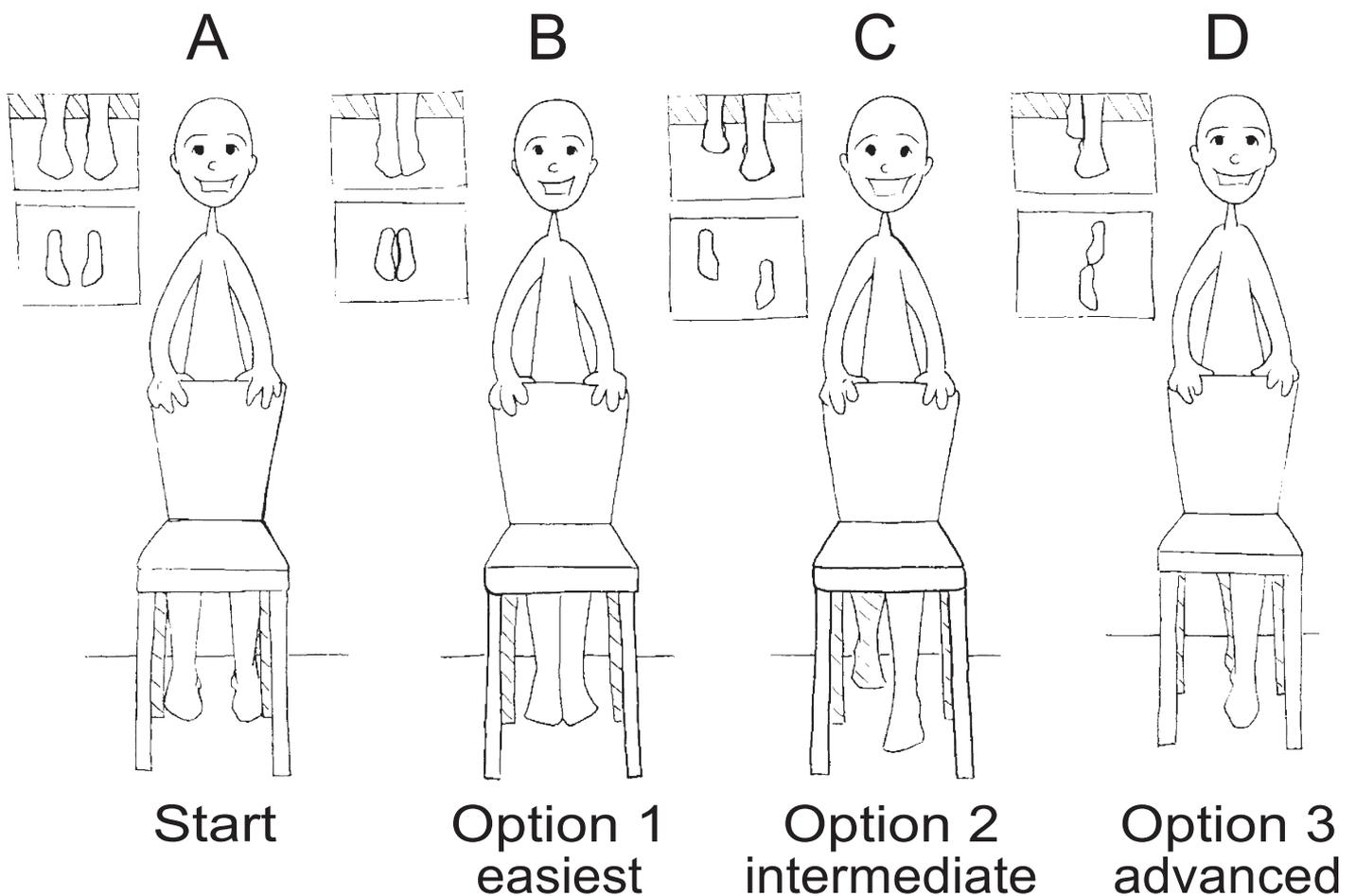
1. Stand near a wall for support, if needed.
2. Place one foot directly in front of the other. The heel of the front foot should touch the toes of the back foot.
3. Hold arms out to sides for balance (**see Figure A**).
4. Stay in this position for 30 seconds.



### 8b. Heel-to-Toe Stand—With Support

Purpose: To improve standing balance.

1. Stand behind chair with your feet shoulder width apart, use the chair for balance as needed (see **Figure A**).
2. Place your feet in the selected position. Option 1 is easiest (see **Figure A**), Option 2 is intermediate (see **Figure B**), and Option 3 is advanced (see **Figure C**).
3. Hold this position for 10 seconds, then return to start position.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times.

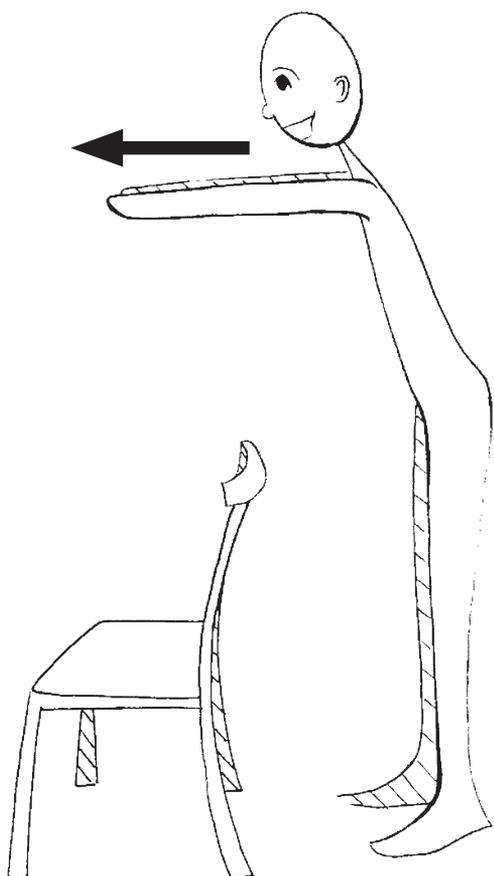


## 9. Reaching Forward and to Side

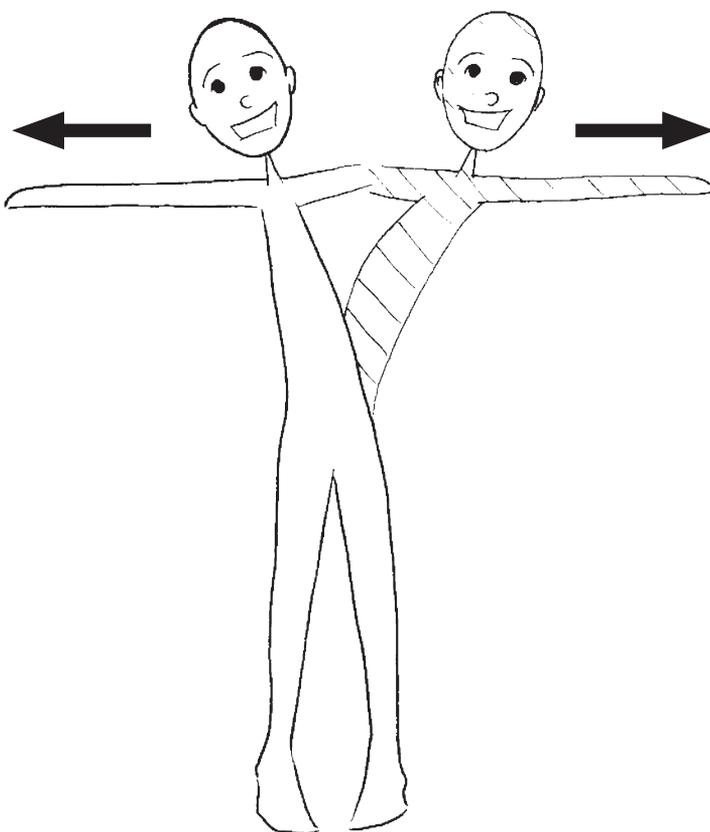
Purpose: To improve standing balance when reaching.

1. Stand behind chair, feet shoulder width apart.
2. Reach forward with both arms (**see Figure A**).
3. Return to upright position.
4. Try reaching left, then right (**see Figure B**).

A



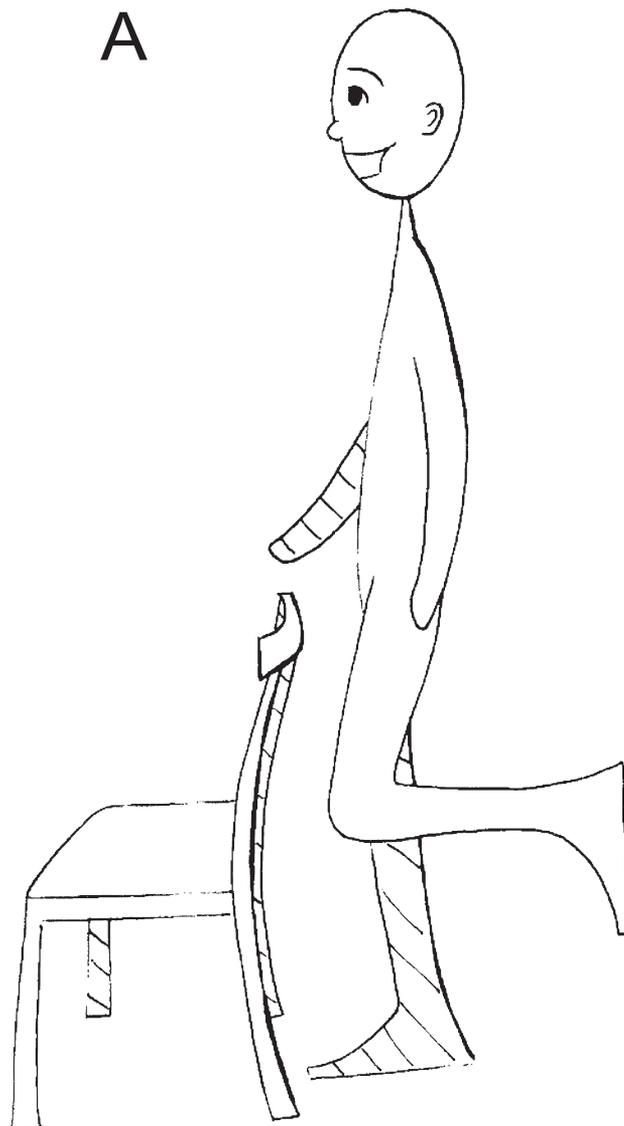
B



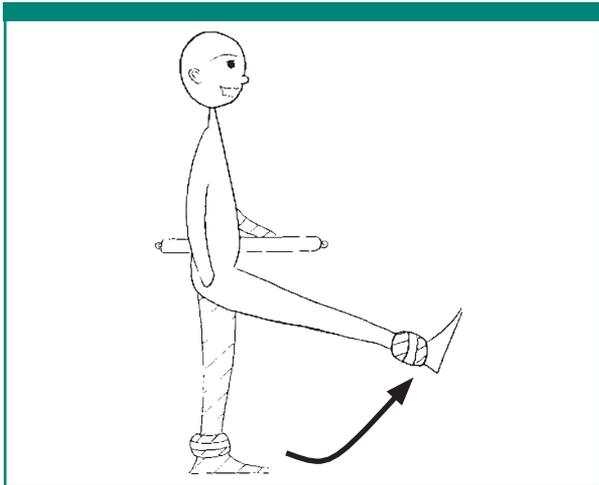
## 10. Standing on One Leg

Purpose: To improve standing balance.

1. Stand behind chair with your feet shoulder width apart.
2. Lift one foot up behind you (**see Figure A**). Do not rest the foot on your opposite leg. Use the chair for support, if needed.
3. Stand on one foot for 10 seconds.
4. Repeat on your other foot.



## Chapter 5. Strength Exercises



### The Importance of Strength Training

This chapter shows you how to do important strength exercises. Exercising with weights can bring you many healthy benefits, such as:

- building bone strength
- delaying/reversing osteoporosis
- building stronger muscles
- improving balance
- increasing energy
- burning calories
- controlling weight
- toning muscles for a trimmer body
- using full range of movement
- improving flexibility

If you know that you are going away for several weeks, consider investing in your own pair of adjustable, strap-on weights. You can buy these at most stores that sell sporting goods.

You can also practice the exercises in this chapter without weights. Your own body weight will provide a workout for these important muscle groups and you will maintain range of movement in your joints.

### Exercises 11–22

#### Strength Exercises—Upper Body

11. Arm Bending (Biceps)
12. Arm Straightening (Triceps)—  
Standing/Sitting Version
13. Arm Raises: Side
14. Arm Raises: Front
15. Overhead Press
16. Seated Crunches (Abdominals)

#### Strength Exercises—Lower Body

- 17a. Knee Bending (Hamstrings)—  
Standing Version
- 17b. Knee Bending (Hamstrings)—  
Sitting Version
18. Knee Straightening (Quadriceps)
19. Leg Lifts: Forward (Quadriceps)
- 20a. Leg Lifts: Backward—Standing  
Version
- 20b. Leg Lifts: Backward—Sitting Version
- 21a. Leg Lifts: Side—Standing Version
- 21b. Leg Lifts: Side—Sitting Version
- 22a. Toe Stands—Standing Version
- 22b. Toe Stands—Sitting Version

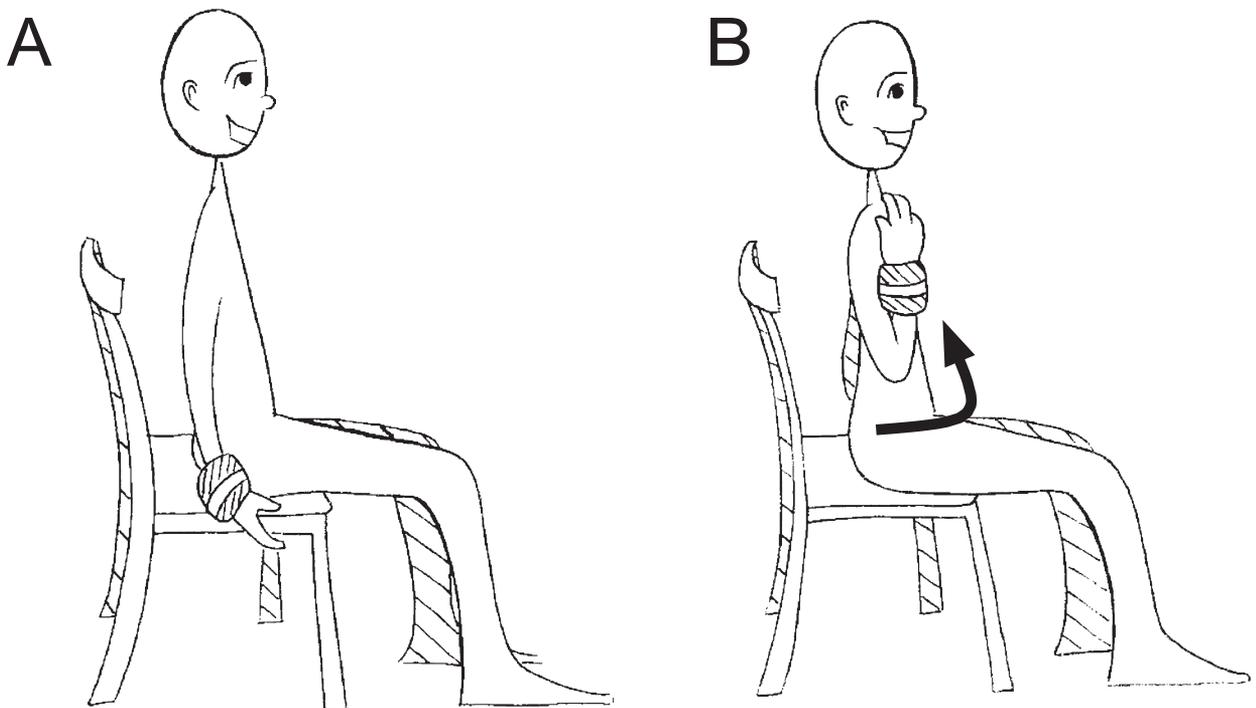
## Strength Exercises—Upper Body

### 11. Arm Bending (Biceps)

Purpose: To strengthen the upper arm muscles that flex the elbow.

Function: Eating and personal hygiene, such as washing and brushing hair.

1. Sit upright toward the front of the chair with your feet flat on the floor and arms at your sides with weights around wrists. Hold your elbows toward your body (**see Figure A**).
2. With palms facing up, bend one arm at the elbow and lift the weight toward your shoulder (**see Figure B**).
3. Do not move your upper arm or shoulder during the lift. Be careful not to use back muscles to “swing” the weights up. If this occurs, reduce wrist weight.
4. Slowly lower the weight to the starting position.
5. Repeat 8 to 10 times.

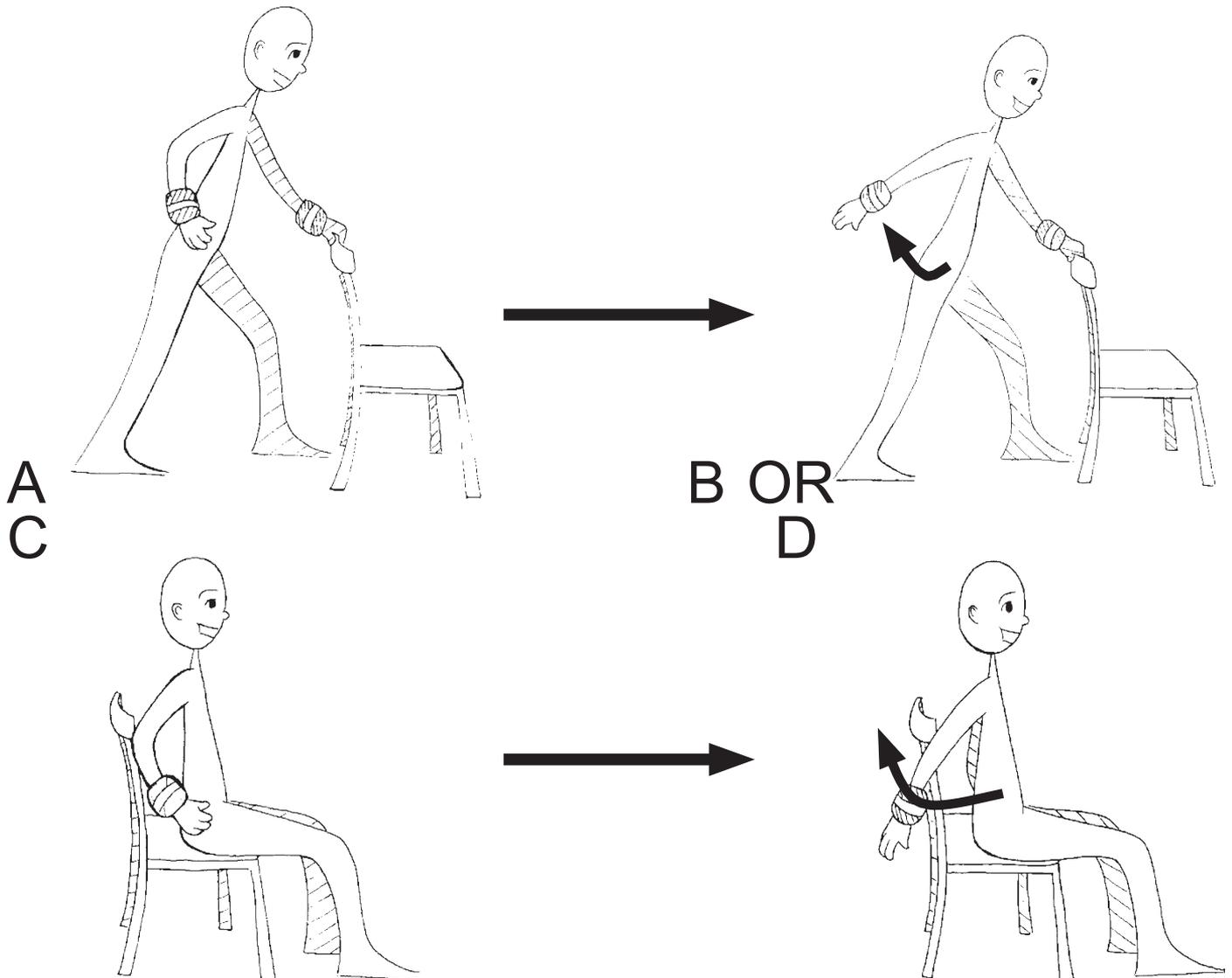


## 12. Arm Straightening (Triceps)—Standing/Sitting Version

**Purpose:** To strengthen the muscles at the back of the upper arm that extend the elbow.

**Function:** Getting out of a bathtub or chair.

1. If standing, put left foot slightly in front of right foot and bend your knees slightly (**see Figure A**). If sitting, use proper posture (**see Figure C**). Start with your right fist on right hip and tuck the right elbow behind.
2. Extend your arm straight back, keeping the elbow steady and in the same location and return fist to hip (**see Figures B and D**).
3. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each side.

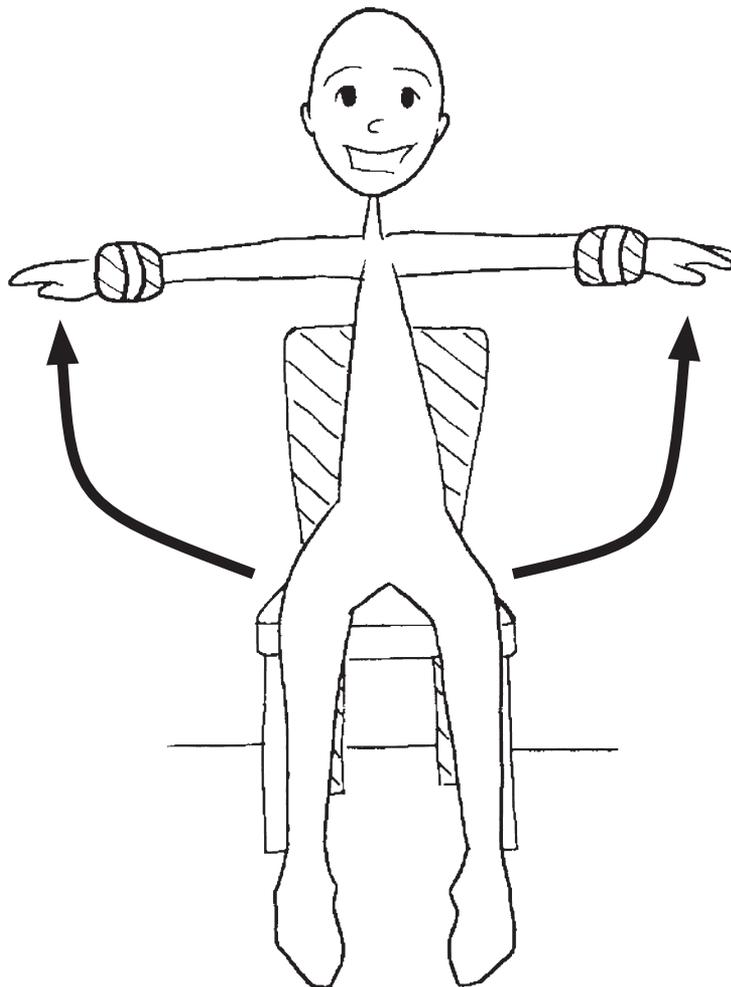


### 13. Arm Raises: Side

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles that raise arms out to sides.

1. Start with arms down at your sides.
2. Lift both arms up and out to each side (**see Figure A**). Hold for 3 seconds.
3. Slowly lower arms back down to your sides.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times.

A

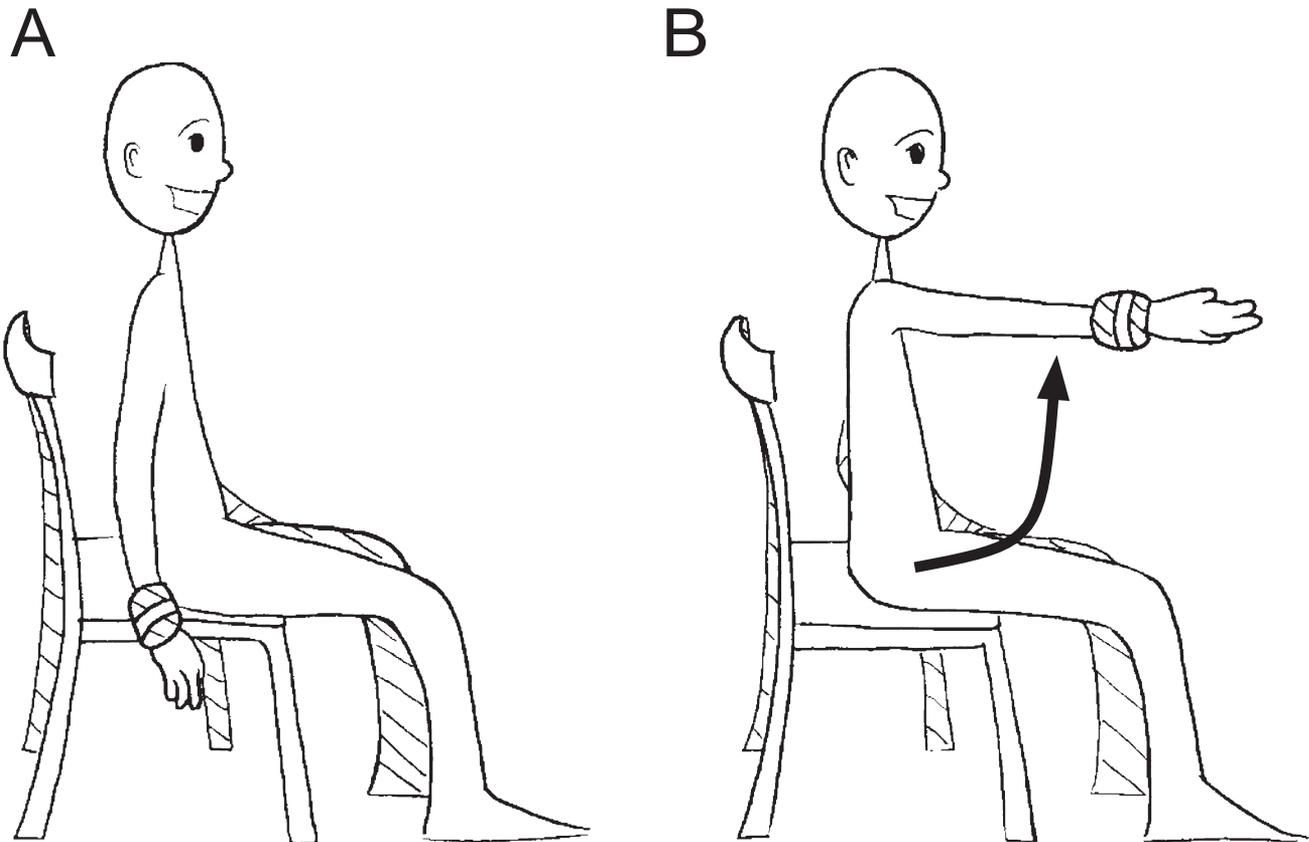


## 14. Arm Raises: Front

**Purpose:** To strengthen the muscles in the shoulders which help with lifting and hand function.

**Function:** Bathing, dressing, and eating

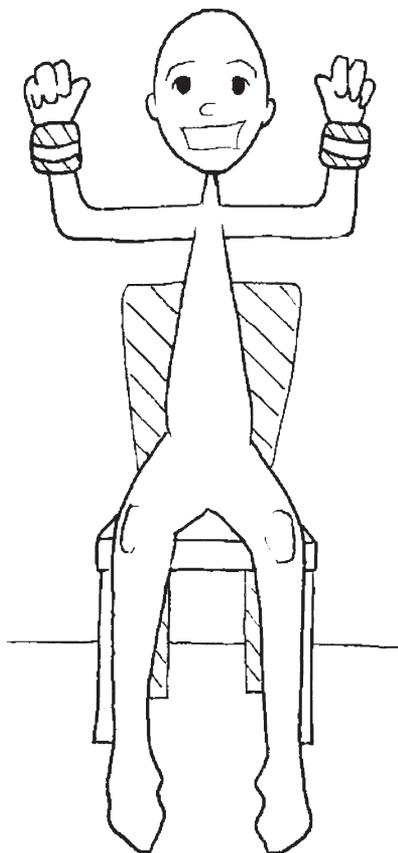
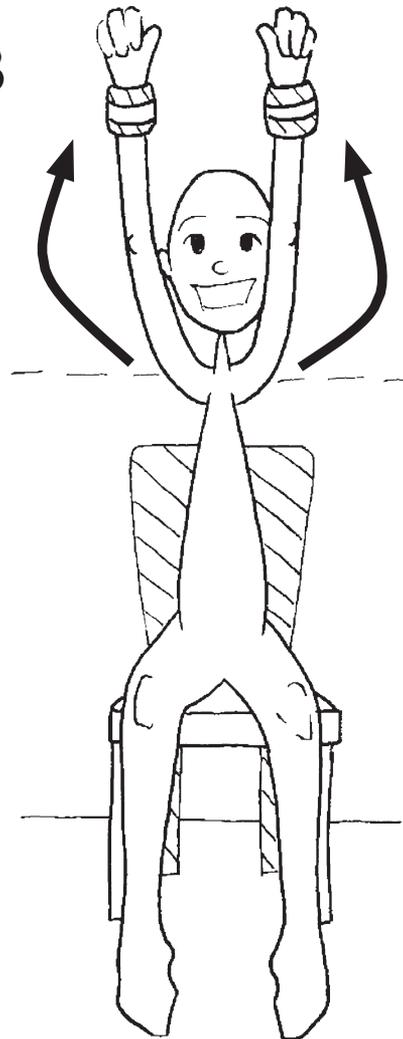
1. Sit upright toward the front of the chair with feet flat on the floor and arms at your sides with weights around wrists (**see Figure A**).
2. Raise one arm slowly to shoulder height (**see Figure B**). Keep your elbows slightly bent. Be careful not to use back muscles to “swing” the weights up. If this occurs, reduce wrist weight.
3. Lower the arm slowly down the same path to the starting position.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each side.



## 15. Shoulder Strengthening (Overhead Press)

Purpose: To strengthen shoulder muscles needed for lifting.

1. Start with your elbows bent, up, and out to sides (**see Figure A**).
2. Raise hands above your head, straightening elbows (**see Figure B**).
3. Return to bent elbow position.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times.

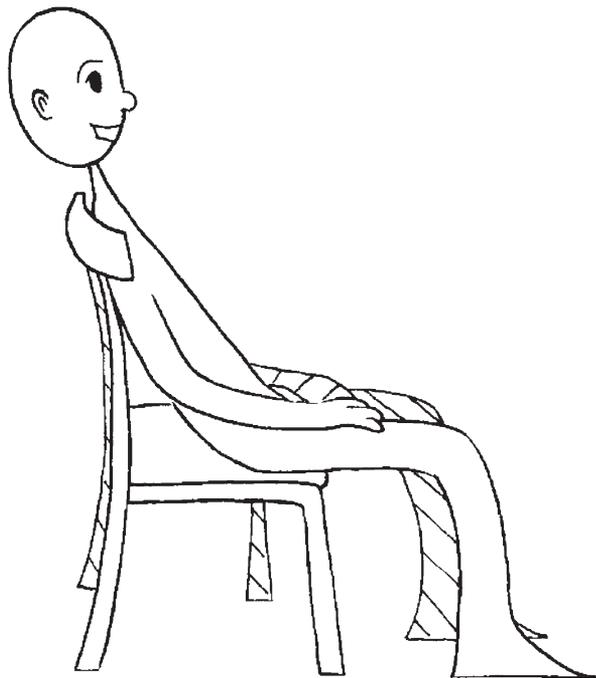
**A****B**

## 16. Seated Crunches (Abdominals)

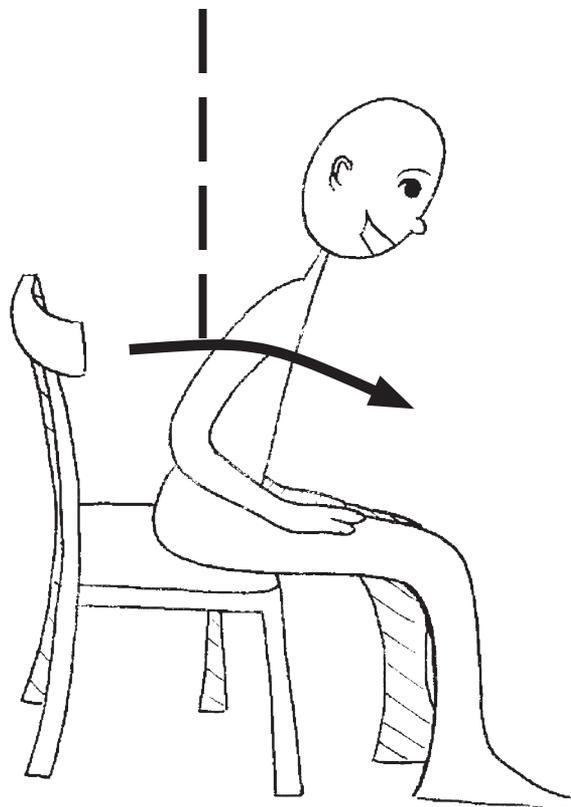
Purpose: To increase “core strength” for all standing and walking activities.

1. Sit with buttocks toward front of seat.
2. Lean back against the chair back (**see Figure A**).
3. Without using your hands, bring your body forward (**see Figure B**).
4. Slowly lean backward and forward 10 times.

A



B



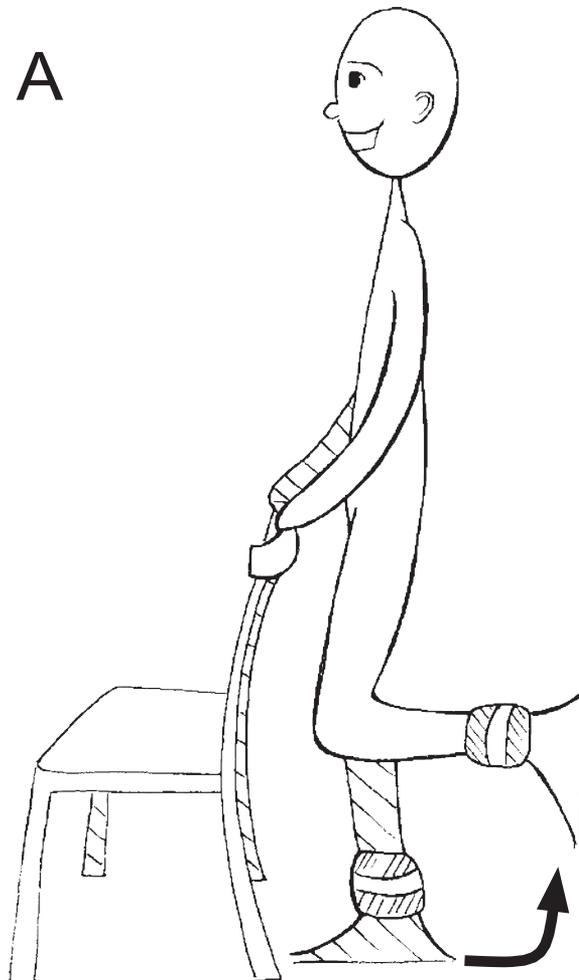
## Strength Exercises—Lower Body

### 17a. Knee Bending (Hamstrings)—Standing Version

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles in the back of the thigh.

Function: Walking

1. With ankle weights in place, stand upright while using the back of a chair for balance. Place your feet shoulder width apart and your knees side by side.
2. Step back with one foot and point the toes.
3. Without moving the thigh at all, raise the heel of that foot toward your buttocks (**see Figure A**).
4. Lower your toe slowly to the starting position without touching the floor.
5. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each side.



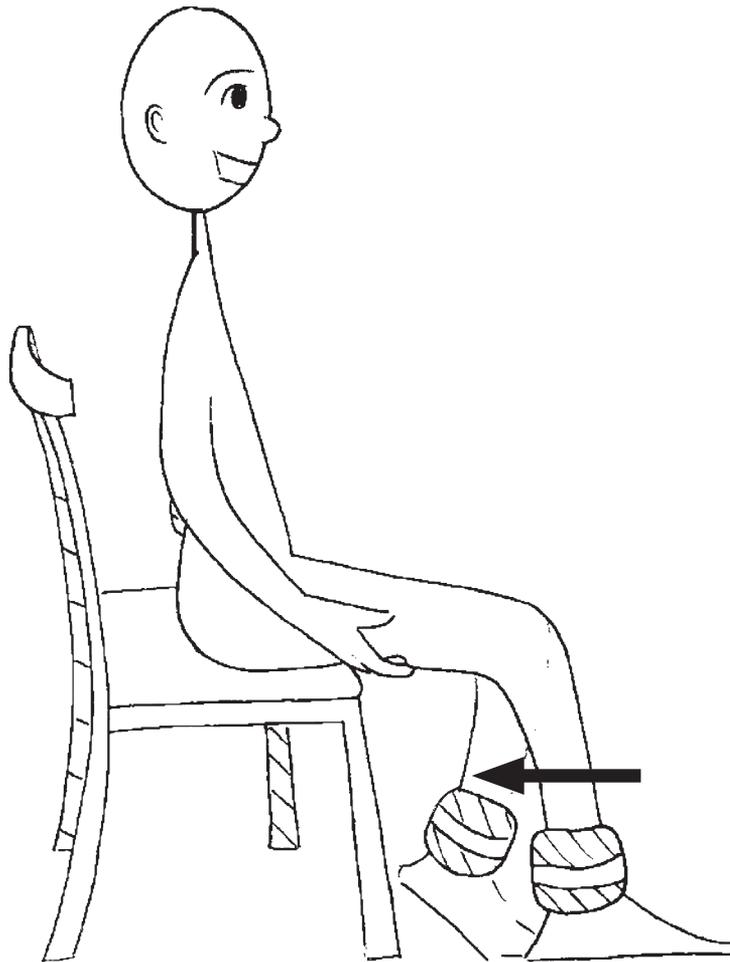
### 17b. Knee Bending (Hamstrings)—Sitting Version

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles in the back of the thigh.

Function: Walking

1. Start sitting toward the front of chair with feet flat on the ground.
2. Slide foot behind you, then return to starting position (**see Figure A**).
3. Repeat 8 to 10 times.

A

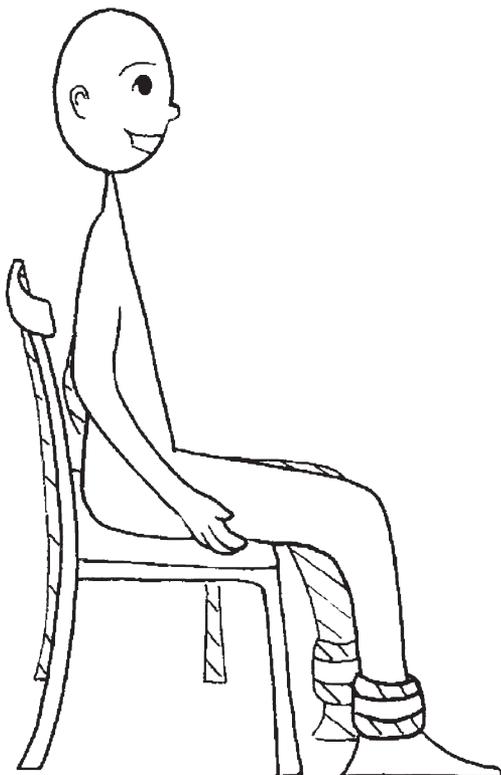
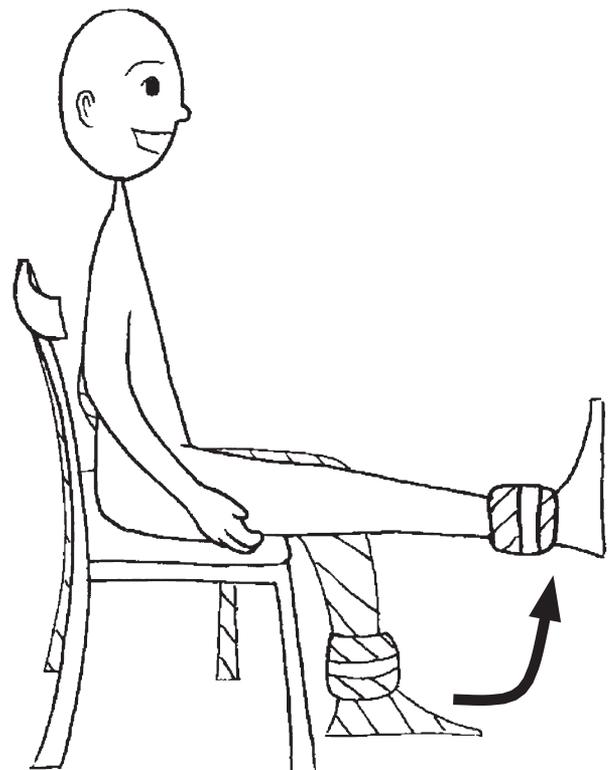


## 18. Knee Straightening (Quadriceps)

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles that lift and support the knee.

Function: Getting out of a chair.

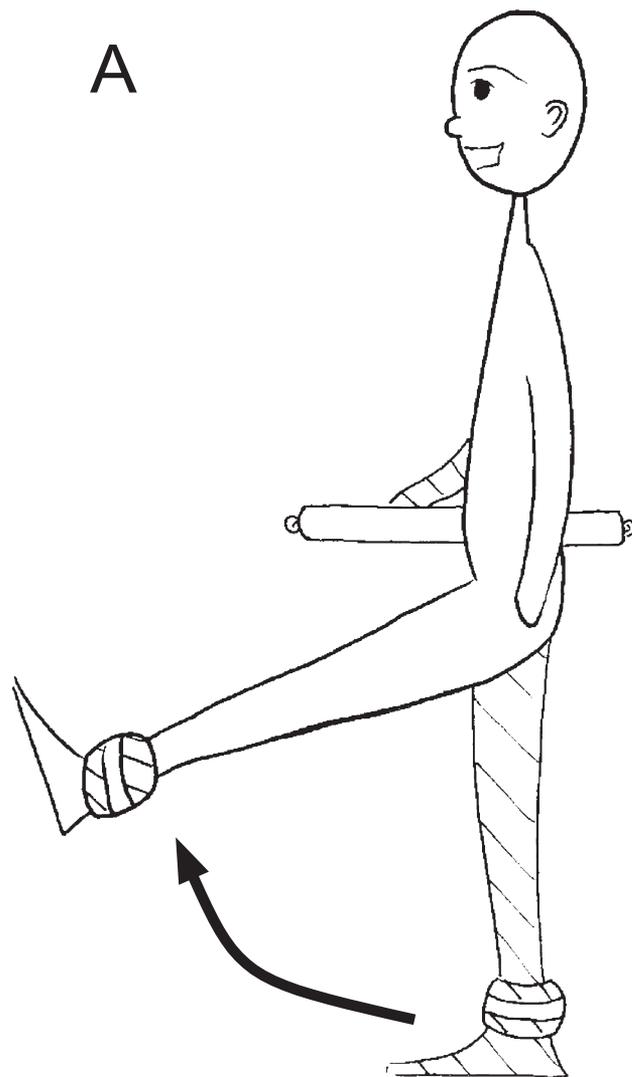
1. Sit upright, slightly forward in the chair, but with thighs supported (a rolled towel may be used beneath thighs for additional support). Do not lean against the back of the chair. Feet should be flat on the floor with weights around the ankles (**see Figure A**).
2. Lift foot until your leg is almost straight (**see Figure B**).
3. Lower your foot slowly to the starting position without letting it touch the floor.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each side.

**A****B**

### 19. Leg Lifts: Forward (Quadriceps)

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles at the front of the thigh.

1. Stand with one hand on chair, feet shoulder width apart.
2. Keeping knee straight, lift leg up in front of you (**see Figure A**).
3. Slowly lower your leg back down to the starting position.
4. Repeat with your other leg.
5. Then repeat 8 to 10 times on each leg.

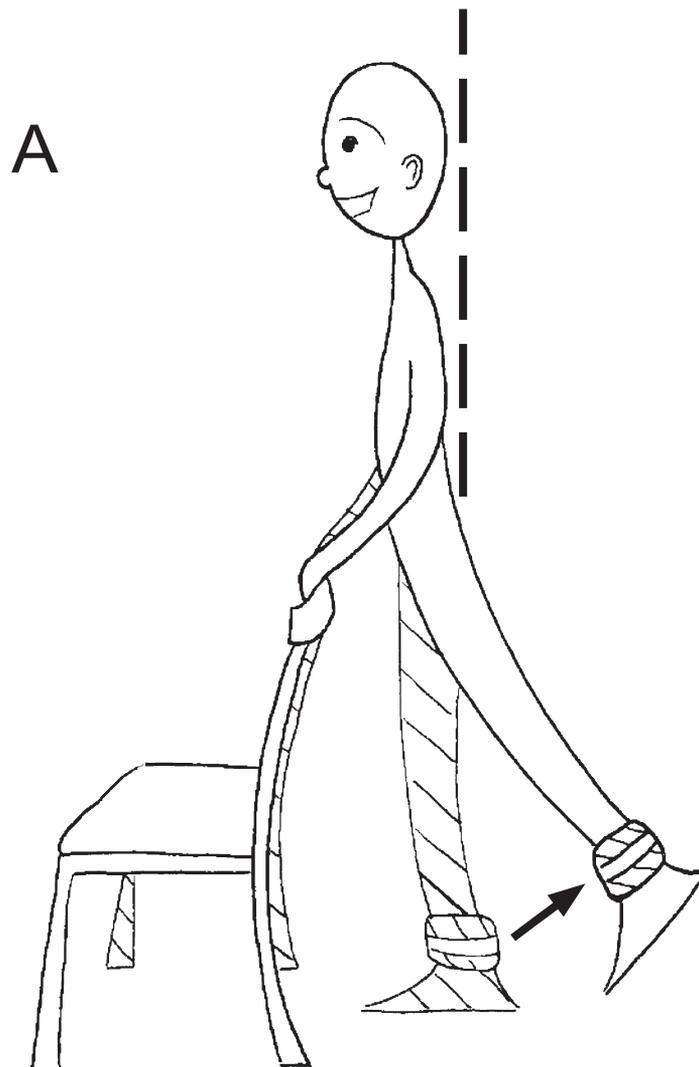


### 20a. Leg Lifts: Backward—Standing Version

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles in the buttocks and lower back.

Function: Getting in and out of a chair, going up and down stairs.

1. Stand, holding onto the back of the chair and step back so you are leaning slightly forward (not more than 30 degrees), with ankle weights in place and knees soft.
2. Lift one leg straight out behind you without bending your knee or moving your upper body (**see Figure A**). Tighten the buttock at the top of the lift. Avoid lifting your leg too high.
3. Lower your leg slowly to the starting position without touching the floor.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each side.

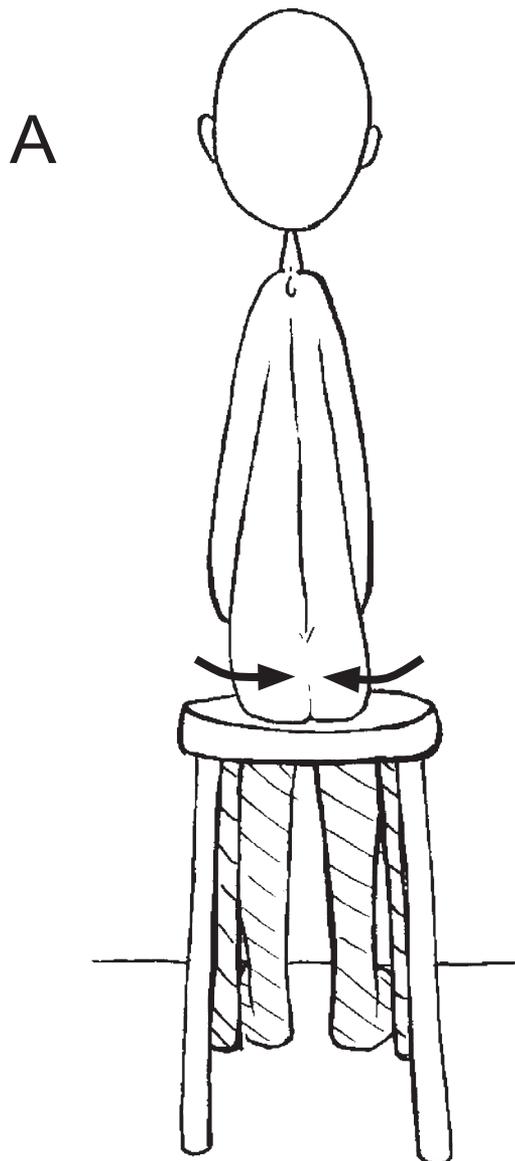


### 20b. Leg Lifts: Backward—Sitting Version

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles in the buttocks and lower back.

Function: Getting in and out of a chair, going up and down stairs

1. Sit with feet flat on the ground. (Sitting toward the front of the chair will enable you to work on balance. Sitting toward the back of the chair will give you more support.)
2. Squeeze your buttocks together (**see Figure A**). Hold for 3 counts.
3. Repeat 8 to 10 times.



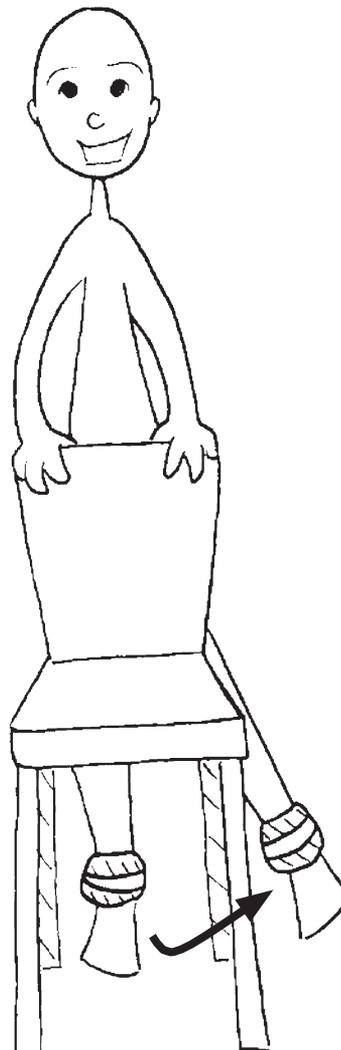
### 21a. Leg Lifts: Side—Standing Version

**Purpose:** To strengthen the muscles at the side of the hips and thighs that pull your legs out to the side.

**Function:** Walking

1. Stand upright holding onto the back of a chair with weights around the ankles.
2. Keep your body upright with your knees soft. Move one leg straight out to the side, making sure that your toes are always facing forward (**see Figure A**). Avoid leaning to the side and/or lifting your leg too high.
3. Lower your leg slowly to the starting position without touching the floor, while maintaining some tension in the leg.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each side.

**A**

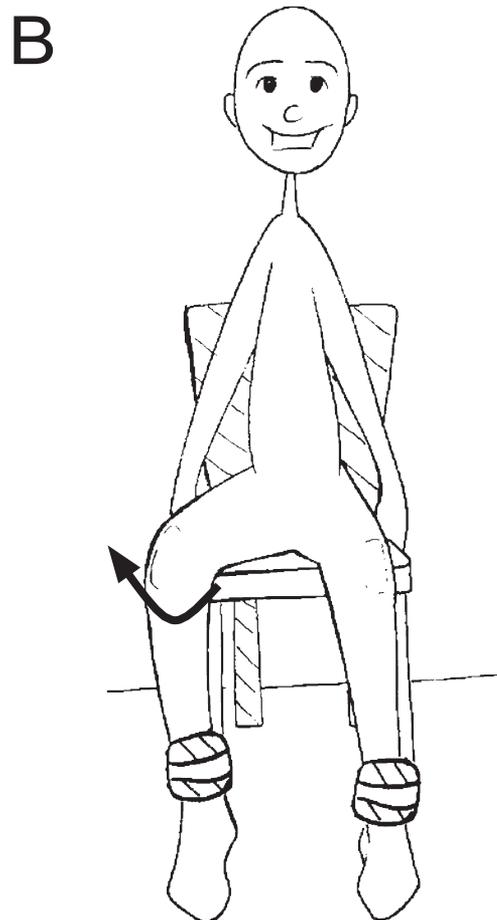
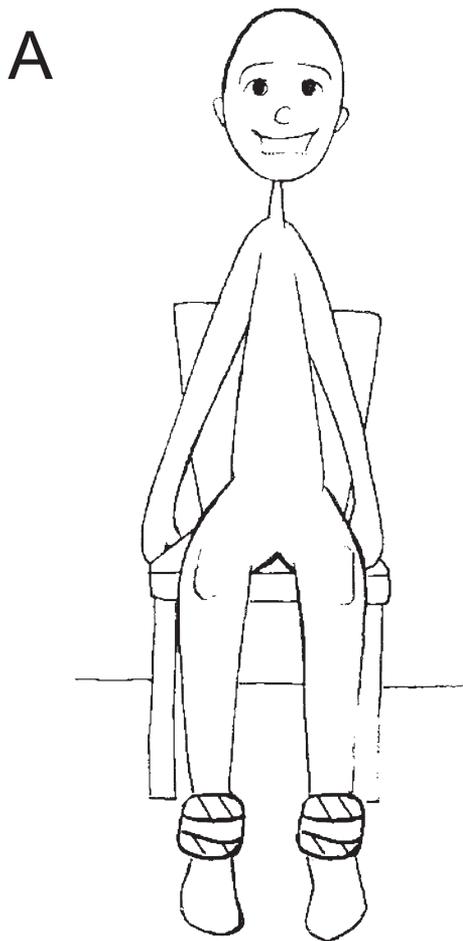


### 21b. Leg Lifts: Side—Sitting Version

**Purpose:** To strengthen the muscles at the side of the hips and thighs that pull your legs out to the side.

**Function:** Walking

1. Start sitting toward the front of chair with your feet flat on the ground **(see Figure A)**.
2. Lift leg to side as far as comfortable **(see Figure B)**. Hold for 3 counts.
3. Repeat 8 to 10 times on each leg.

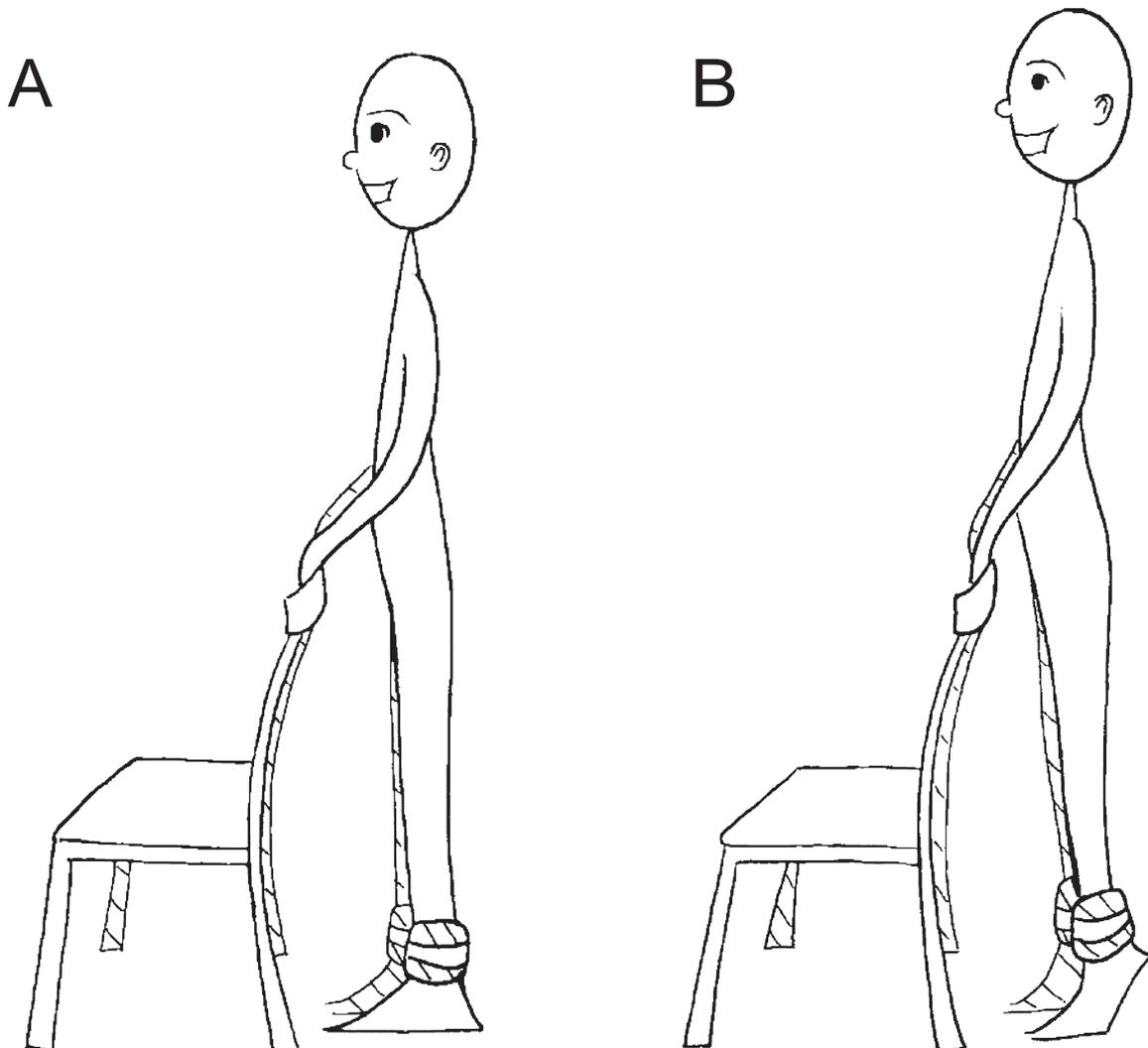


## 22a. Toe Stands—Standing Version

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles in the ankle and back of the calf.

Function: Walking, going up and down stairs

1. Stand upright while holding onto the back of a chair with ankle weights in place and feet parallel (**see Figure A**).
2. Raise your body up on your toes without letting go of the chair (**see Figure B**).
3. Lower your body to the starting position. For variety, this exercise may be performed with toes turned slightly outward.



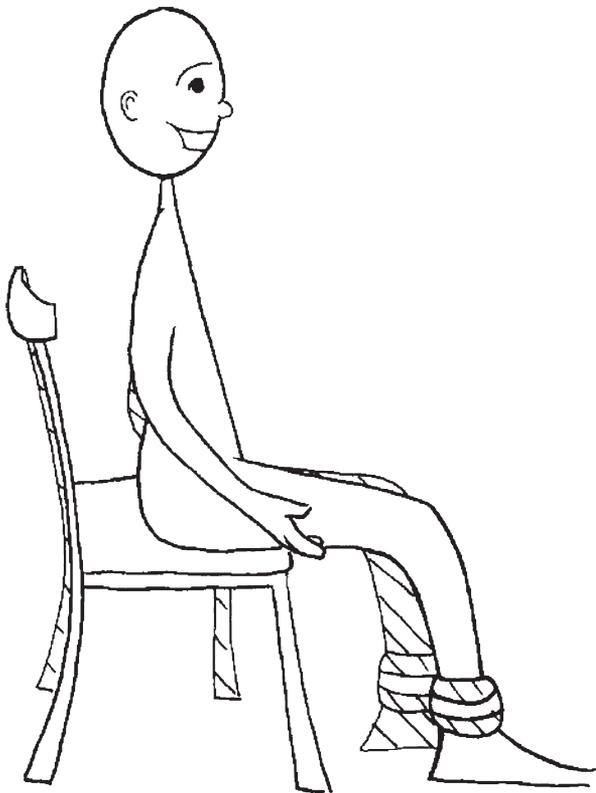
## 22b. Toe Stands—Sitting Version

Purpose: To strengthen the muscles in the ankle and back of the calf.

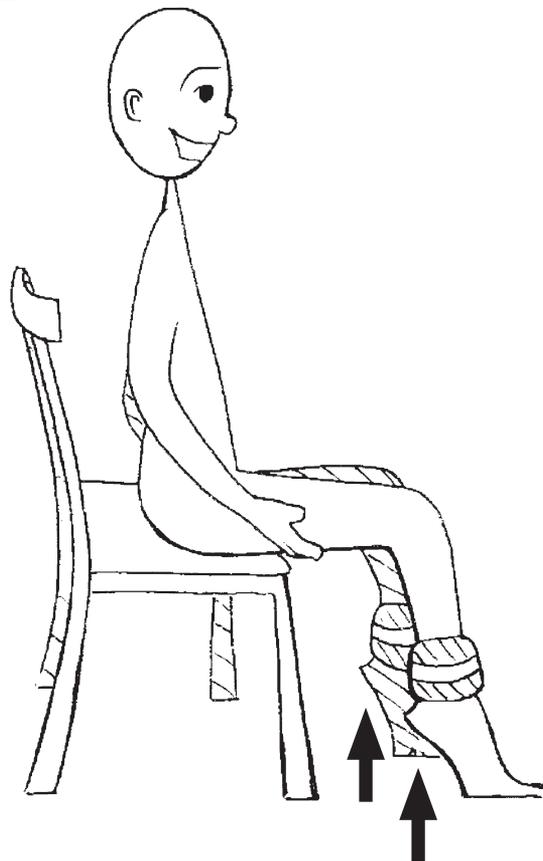
Function: Walking, going up and down stairs

1. Start sitting toward the front of chair with feet flat on the ground (**see Figure A**).
2. Raise your heels off the floor, pressing down into floor with the balls of your feet (**see Figure B**). Hold for 3 counts.
3. Repeat 8 to 10 times.

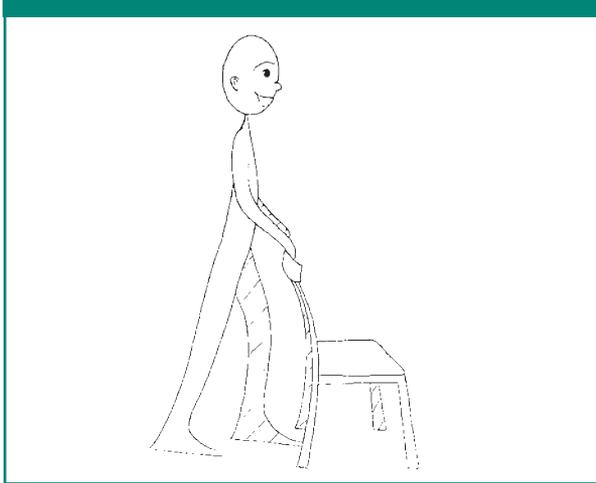
A



B



## Chapter 6. Stretching Exercises



### The Importance of Stretching

This chapter shows you how to do important stretching exercises. Maintaining good flexibility is an important part of remaining independent—think of all the jobs and activities that require you to reach or stretch!

Stretching exercises increase your range of movement in your joints, and can help to reduce chronic pain in your joints and muscles.

It is important to stretch your muscles and joints at the end of your exercise routine. Exercise increases the blood flow to the muscles—that's why we get hot and perspire when we exercise. This heat relaxes the muscles, making it easier to stretch after exercising.

### Exercises 23–33

#### Stretching Exercises—Upper Body

23. Neck Stretch
24. Arm Circles
25. Scratch Between Shoulder Blades
26. Clasp Hands in Front
27. Clasp Hands Behind Head
28. Wrist Stretch (Praying Position)
29. Hand Stretch

#### Stretching Exercises—Lower Body

- 30a. Quadriceps Stretch—Without Support
- 30b. Quadriceps Stretch—With Support
31. Hamstring Stretch
32. Inner Thigh Stretch
- 33a. Calf Stretch—Standing Version
- 33b. Calf Stretch—Sitting Version



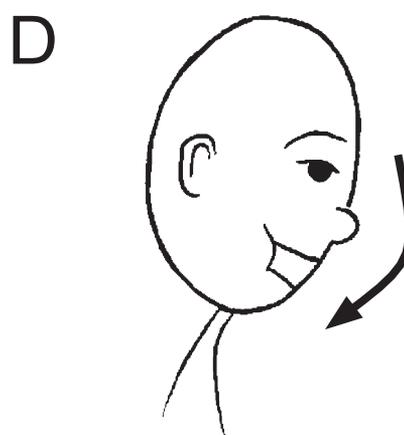
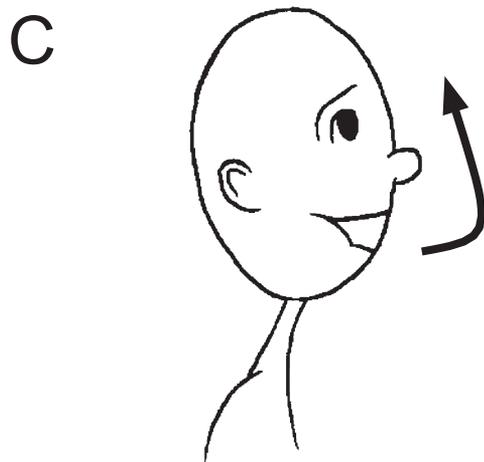
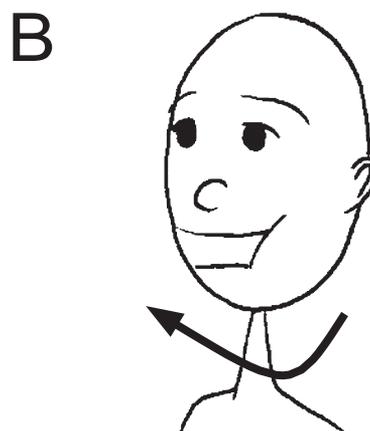
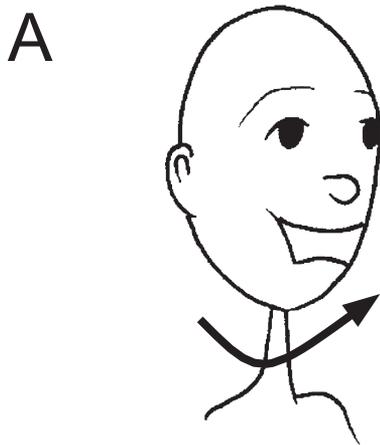
## Stretching Exercises—Upper Body

### 23. Neck Stretch

Purpose: To improve flexibility of the neck.

1. Sit upright in a chair. Keep your body still as you move through the exercise.
2. Slowly move your chin over to one shoulder and then to the other as if nodding “no” (**see Figures A and B**). Repeat several times.
3. Slowly lift your chin up slightly and back toward your chest as if nodding “yes” (**see Figures C and D**). Repeat several times.

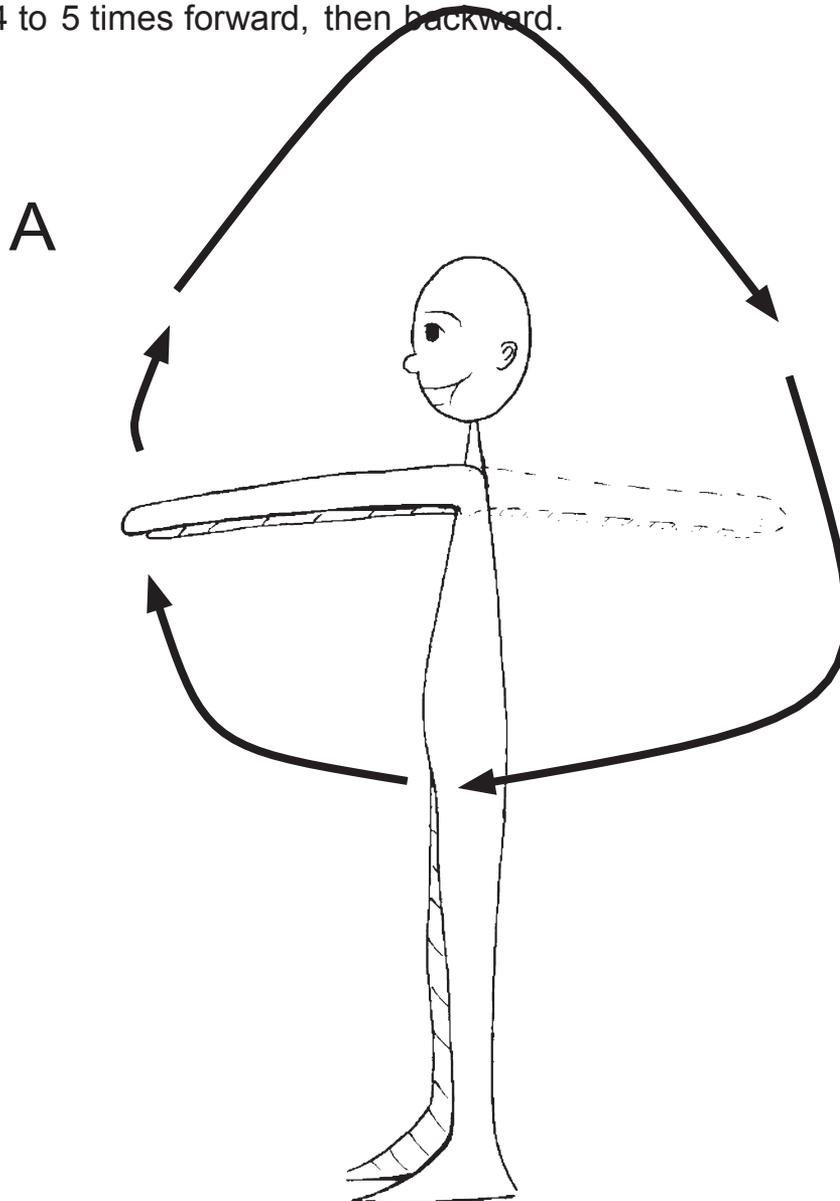
NOTE: Do this exercise slowly and gently. Do not strain your neck.



## 24. Arm Circles

Purpose: To improve flexibility in shoulders.

1. Start with arms down by your sides.
2. In one flowing motion with your elbows straight, lift your arms up in front of you, rotate above your head, and then bring them down behind you (**see Figure A**).
3. Return your arms to the starting position.
4. Repeat 4 to 5 times forward, then backward.

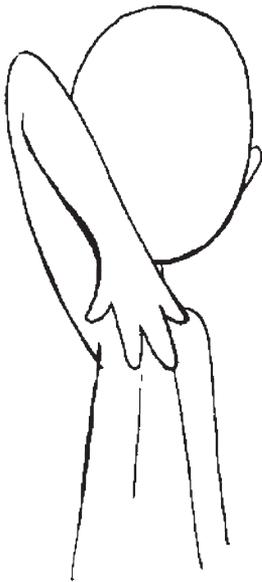


## 25. Scratch Between Shoulder Blades

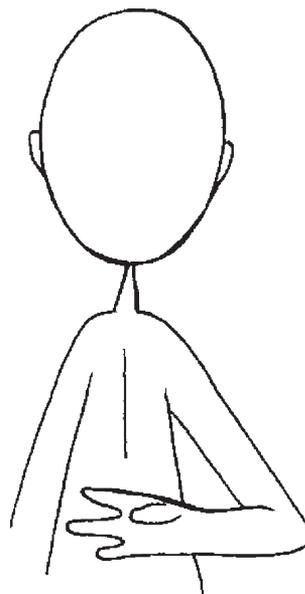
Purpose: To improve flexibility of shoulders.

1. Lift arm up above your head
2. Bend arm backward to try to scratch between your shoulder blades (**see Figure A**). Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
3. Return arm to your side.
4. Reach arm down behind your back.
5. Bend arm upward toward your shoulder blades (**see Figure B**). Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
6. Return arm to your side.
7. Repeat 3 times on each side.

A



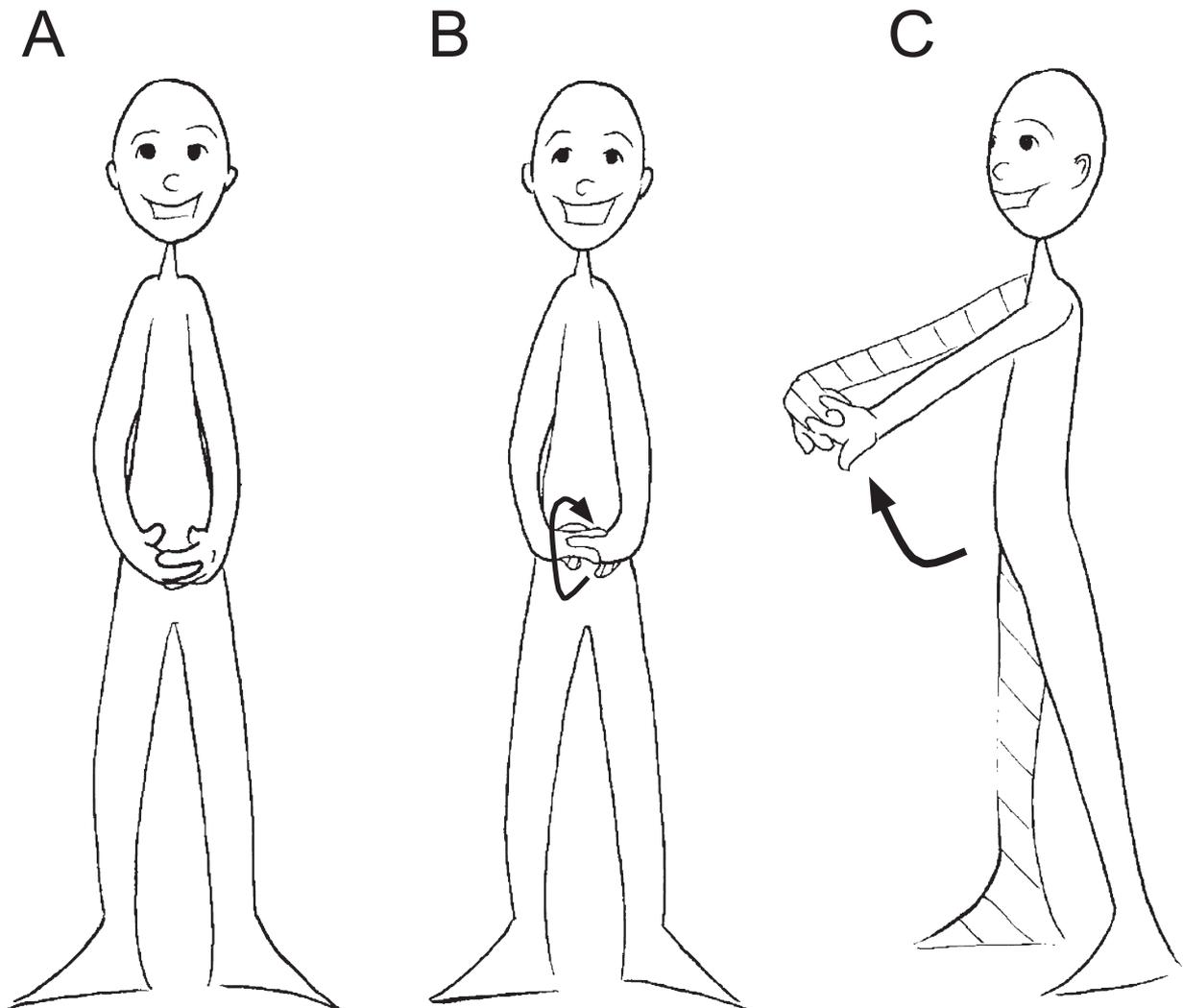
B



## 26. Clasp Hands in Front

Purpose: To stretch muscles in upper back.

1. Start with arms hanging down in front of you, fingers clasped (**see Figure A**).
2. Rotate hands toward you, so palms are now facing toward floor (**see Figure B**).
3. Keeping elbows straight, lift hands up in front of you (**see Figure C**).
4. Try to stretch the space between your shoulder blades. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
5. Slowly return to starting position.

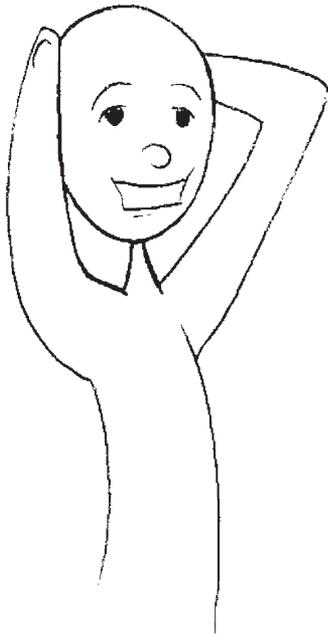


## 27. Clasp Hands Behind Head

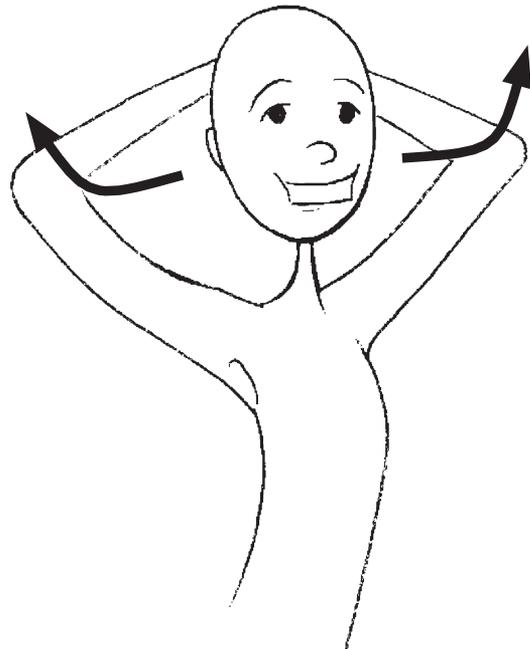
Purpose: To improve posture by stretching the muscles in your chest.

1. Sit or stand. Link your hands behind your head with your elbows close to your forehead (**see Figure A**).
2. Keeping your hands in the same place, draw your elbows backward until they are in a straight line with your ears (**see Figure B**). Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
3. Repeat.

A



B

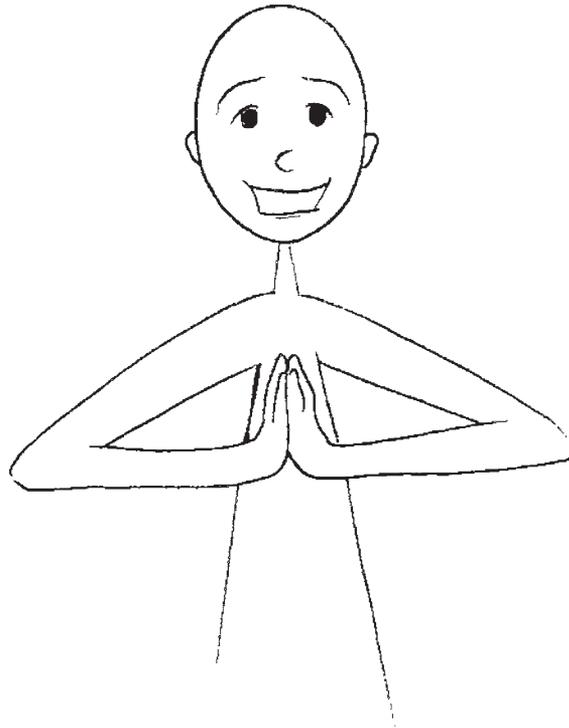


## 28. Wrist Stretch (Praying Position)

Purpose: To improve flexibility of wrists.

1. Place palms together and lift arms out in front of you.
2. Bend elbows to bring hands up and closer to your chest.
3. Rotate hands so that your fingers are pointing upward (**see Figure A**).  
Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.

A



## 29. Hand Stretch

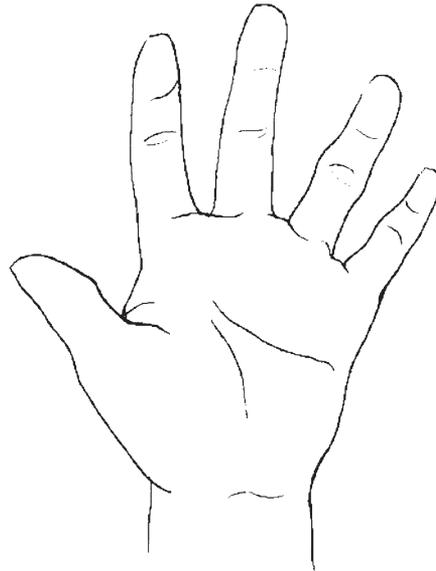
Purpose: To improve flexibility of hands.

1. Sit upright in a chair with your arms stretched out.
2. Make fists with your hands (**see Figure A**) and then fling them open, stretching your fingers wide (**see Figure B**).
3. Repeat 3 to 4 times.

A



B



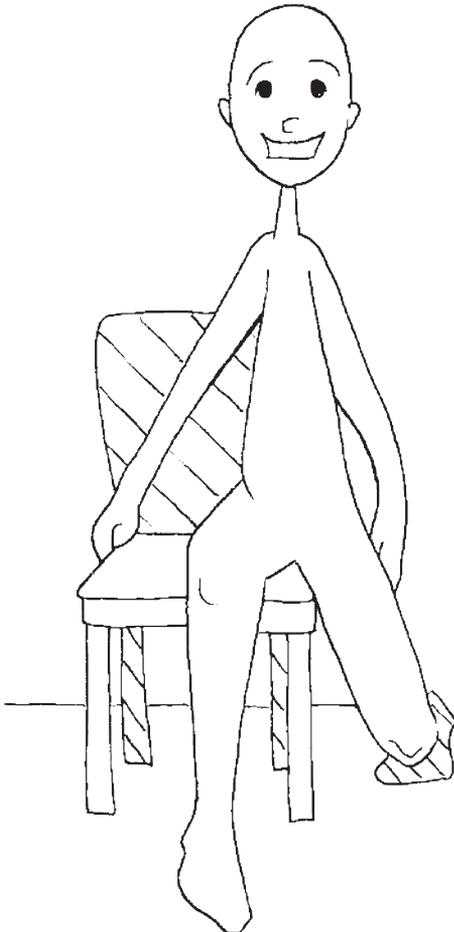
## Stretching Exercises—Lower Body

### 30a. Front of Thigh Stretch (Quadriceps)—Without Support

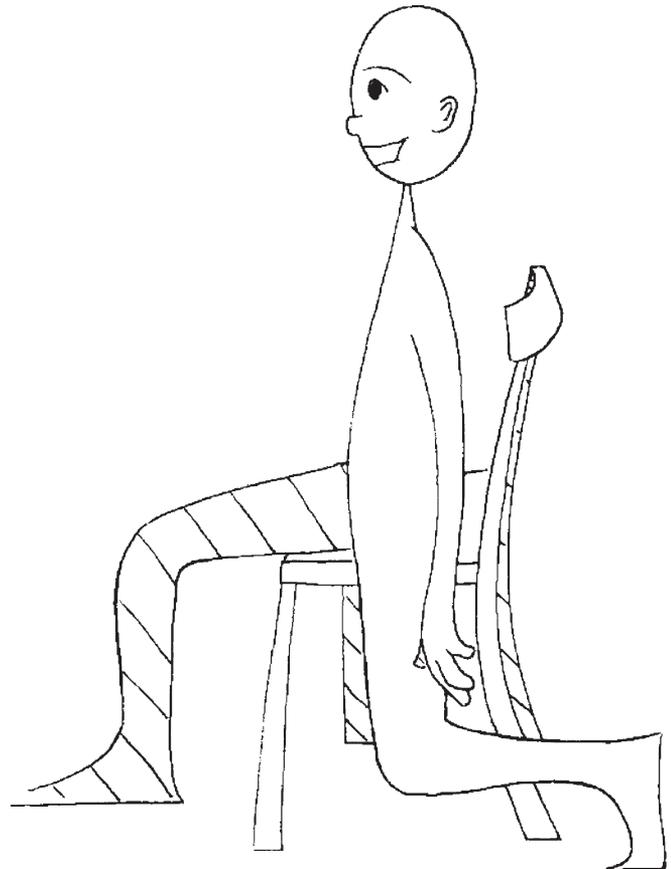
Purpose: To improve flexibility of thigh muscles.

1. Sit on the left side of a chair with your right buttock on the chair. Hold on to right side of chair with your right hand for balance (**see Figure A**).
2. Extend your left foot behind you with toes tucked under (**see Figure B**). Knee should be bent to 90 degrees. For a deeper stretch, extend foot further behind you. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
3. Repeat with your other leg.

**A**  
Front View



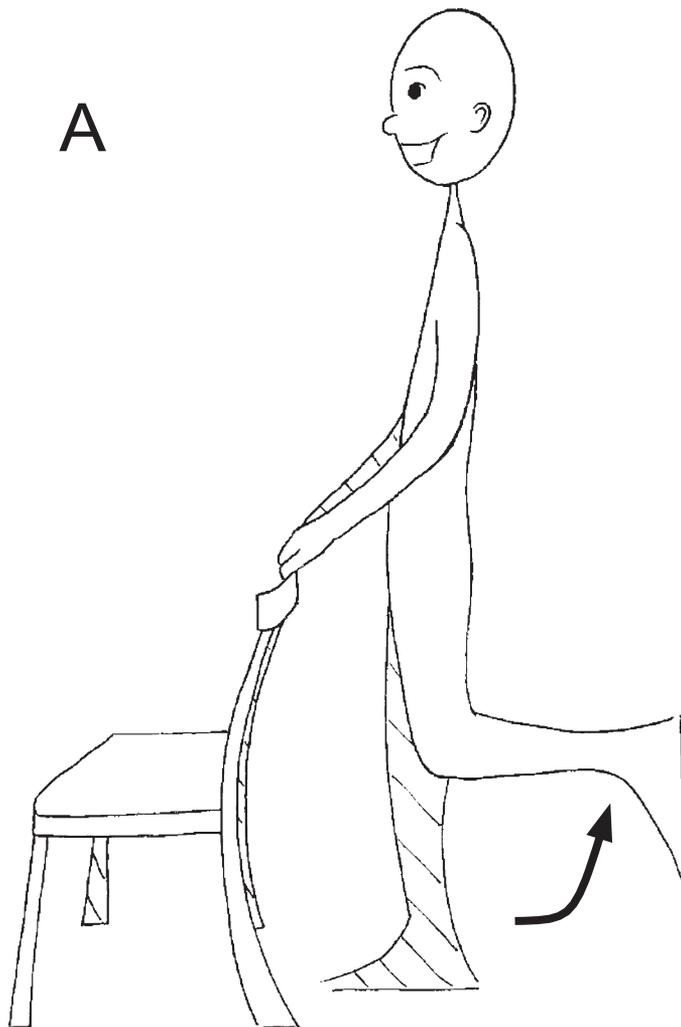
**B**  
Side View



### 30b. Front of Thigh Stretch (Quadriceps)—With Support

Purpose: To improve flexibility of thigh muscles.

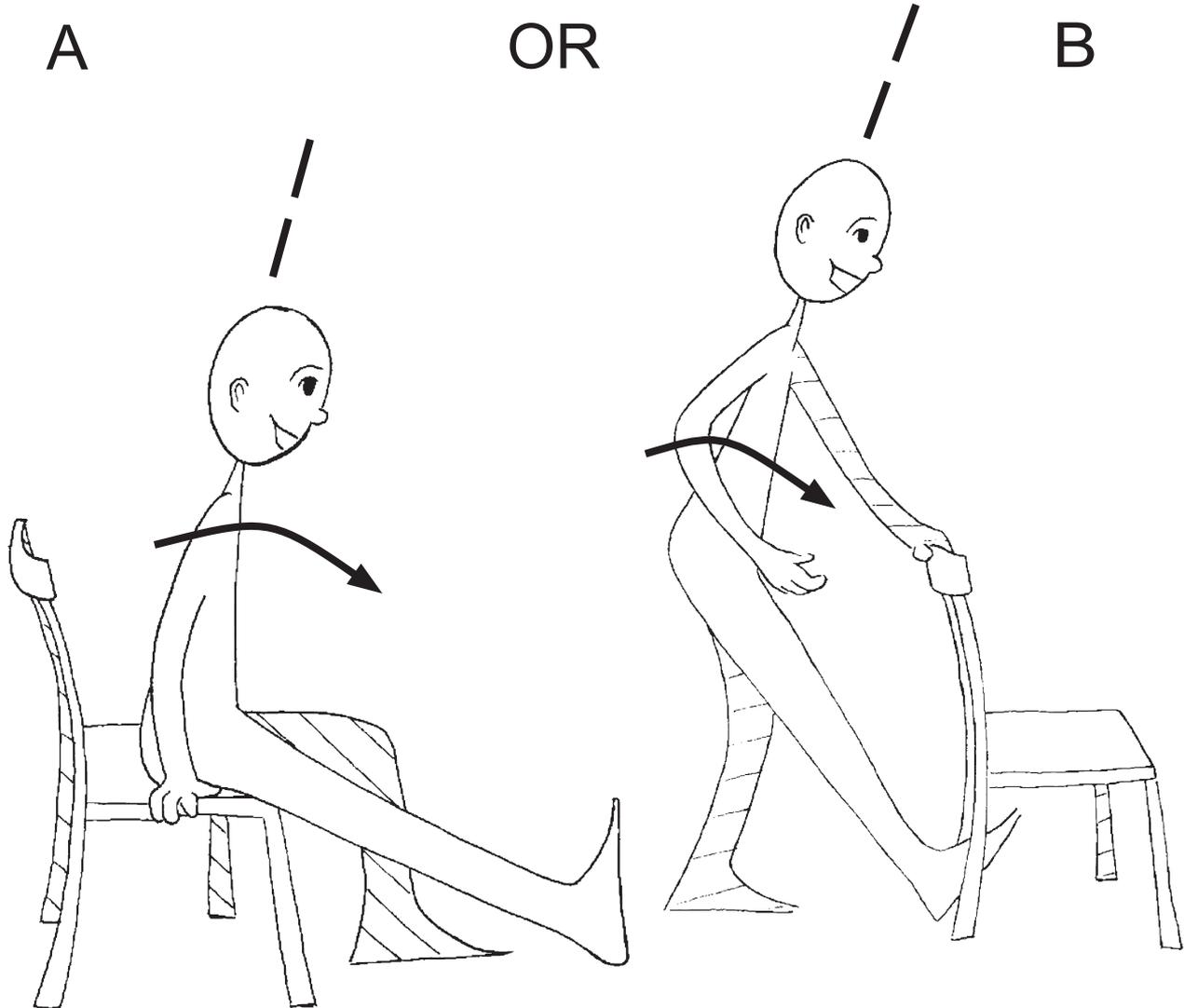
1. Stand behind chair, feet shoulder distance apart, using chair for balance as needed.
2. Bend one leg, keeping hips forward (**see Figure A**). The stretch is in the front of the thigh. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
3. Repeat with your other leg.



### 31. Back of Thigh Stretch (Hamstrings)

Purpose: To improve flexibility of thigh muscles.

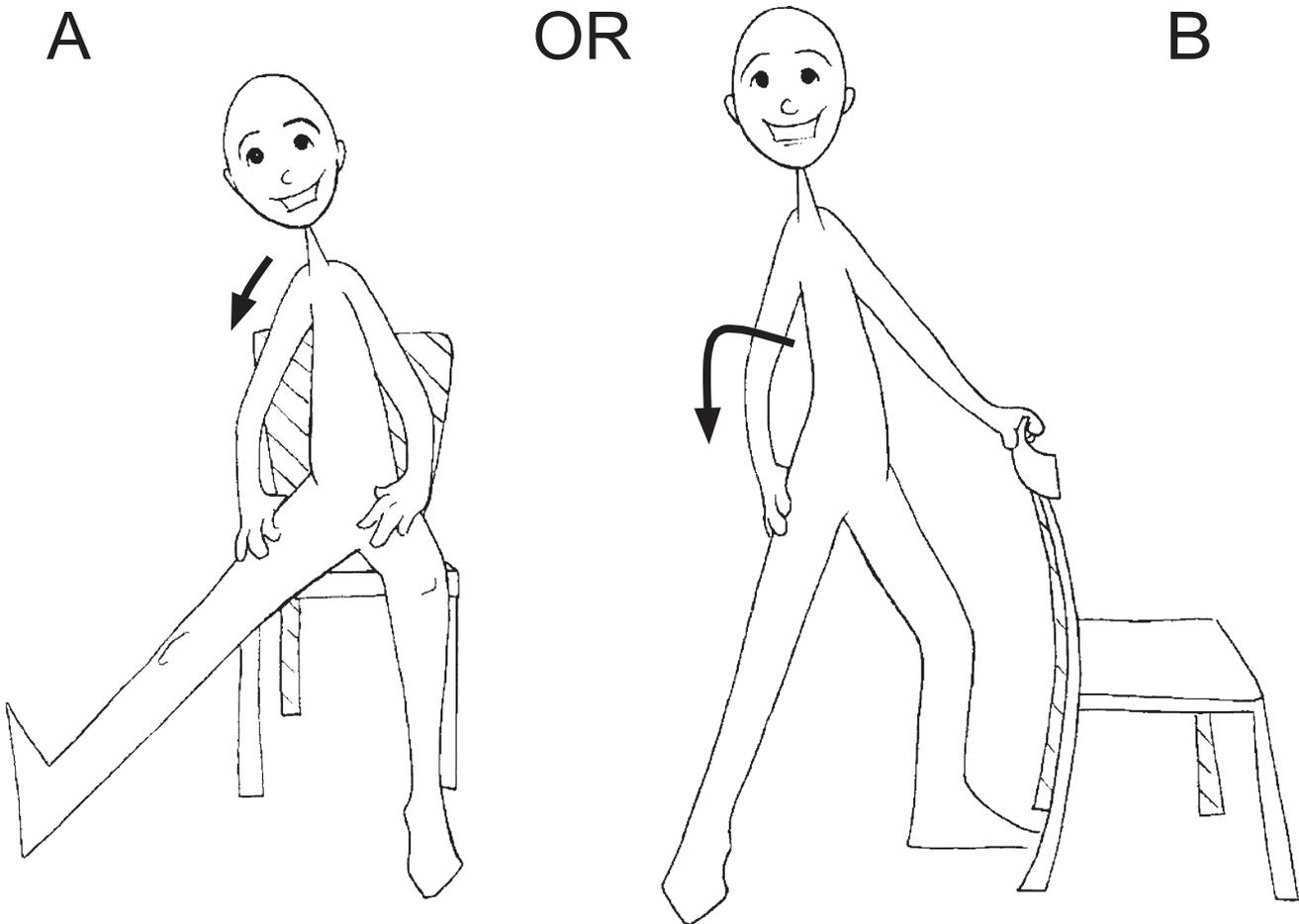
1. Sit toward the front of the chair (**see Figure A**). You can hold on to the sides of the chair for balance. Or, stand behind a chair and use it for support (**see Figure B**).
2. Extend your right leg in front of you. With a straight back, lean forward until you feel a slight stretch in your right hamstring. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
3. Repeat with your other leg.



### 32. Inner Thigh Stretch

Purpose: To improve hip flexibility.

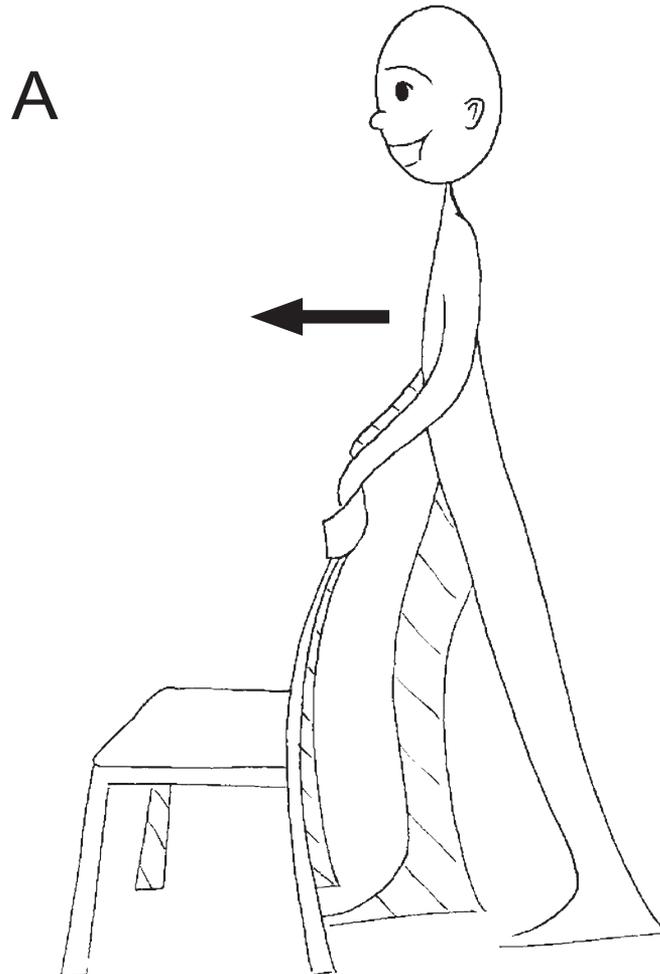
1. Sit upright in a chair with your right leg out to the side, toes up (**see Figure A**). Or, stand with your legs shoulder width apart with your left knee slightly bent and your left foot pointed sideways. Your right leg should be straight with your right foot forward. Use a chair for support (**see Figure B**).
2. Lean slightly toward your right leg until you feel a slight stretch. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
3. Repeat with your other leg.



### 33a. Calf Stretch—Standing Version

Purpose: To improve flexibility of the calf muscles.

1. Use a chair for balance and stand upright.
2. Step back with the right foot, keeping foot flat.
3. Keep the right knee straight, the left knee slightly bent.
4. Slowly lean forward until you feel a slight stretch in the right calf (**see Figure A**). Make sure your knee is behind your right toe. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
5. Repeat with your other leg.

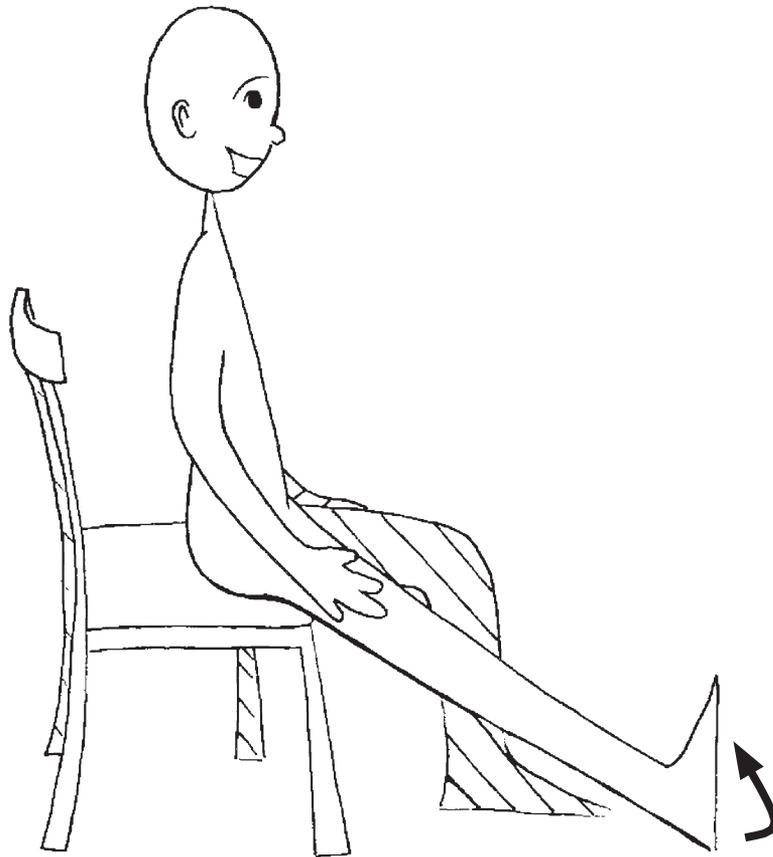


### 33b. Calf Stretch—Sitting Version

Purpose: To improve flexibility of the calf muscles.

1. Start sitting toward front of chair with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Straighten one leg, heel on the floor.
3. Flex foot, pulling toes toward body (**see Figure A**). Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
4. Repeat with your other leg.

A



# Well done!

You have now completed the most important warm-up, aerobic, balance, strengthening, and stretching exercises. Try to do these whenever you miss a class. These exercises are best done three times per week, on alternate days. Your muscles need to rest for a day after doing strengthening exercises.



## Resources

Exercising at home can be very convenient. No travel is required, and the schedule is up to you. Here are some additional resources to help you exercise safely on your own:

- *Exercise: A Guide from the National Institute on Aging (free)*  
120-page exercise guide with exercise diagrams  
To order: Call 800-222-2225 or download from [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov).  
Video of the NIA Exercise Guide: Call 800-222-2225 for cost and availability.
- *AARP's Physical Activities Workbook (first copy free, extra copies \$1 each)*  
To order: Call 888-687-2277 (888-OUR-AARP).
- *AARP's Step Up to Better Health*  
Walking program guide with progress log forms and a step counter (pedometer)  
Program free; pedometer \$9  
To order: Call 800-861-0168 or visit <http://aarp.com/walking>.
- *Sit and Be Fit* video series  
(prices vary by title)  
Videotapes for general chair and stretching/toning exercises, and for exercising with health conditions such as arthritis, COPD, stroke, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, and Parkinson's  
To order: call 509-448-9438 for a catalog or visit [www.sitandbenefit.org](http://www.sitandbenefit.org).

- *Exercise and Your Arthritis (free brochure, \$20 annual membership)*  
24-page brochure from the Arthritis Foundation  
To order: call 800-568-4045 or visit [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org).

You can borrow exercise tapes from the library to figure out which one is right for you.

Another free option is the excellent television show *Sit and Be Fit*. Perfect for exercising at home—in a chair or on the couch—this 30-minute program airs on many PBS television stations Monday through Friday mornings.

For general exercise and health information, you can also contact AARP (888-687-2277 or [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)) or the Arthritis Foundation (800-568-4045 or [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)).

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