

Aerobic exercises

Your exercise session has three parts:

1. warming up
2. main exercises
3. cooling down and stretching

Your main exercise may be aerobic exercise, strengthening or balance exercises, or a mixture.

If you have an exercise trainer, ask them which exercises are best for you – you may not need to do them all.

Aim for at least 10 minutes and remember to warm up and cool down!

Start your aerobic exercise gently and build up as you get more confident. Start with whatever you can do, maybe 1, 2, 5 or even 10 minutes. When you can do this comfortably, increase the time little by little each week, until you can do 30 minutes. You can do them in one go, or if 30 minutes is too long for you, stick to 5 or 10 minutes at a time and try to do several sessions a day.

tip

It's recommended we do 150 minutes of aerobic activity a week. This can be spread by doing about 20 minutes every day, or 30 minutes on five days a week. But if this feels like too much, any activity is better than none.

Walking

Walking is a great way to do aerobic exercise as it can easily be part of your day-to-day activities and can be done anywhere, at any time. Ideally try walking a little every day.

- If you use a mobility aid, such as a walking frame, use it when you walk.
- If you prefer to stay indoors, use a corridor or walk between two places in your home to build up your confidence with walking.
- You can record your walks using our walking record

Warm up by starting slowly and gradually build up your speed.

To get the most benefit, aim to reach a walking pace that's brisk for you and makes you moderately out of breath. Use the talk test on page 4 to check. Walk at this speed for as long as you can. Time your walk.

Aim to walk briskly for 10 minutes at first. When you're comfortable doing this, walk for a bit longer each week. When you can walk for 10 to 20 minutes, try increasing increase your speed.

If this feels like too much, walk briskly for as long as you can and build up the time gradually as you gain fitness.

When you are near the end of your walk, gradually slow your speed to cool down.

Walking and exercising dos and don'ts

Do	Don't
Carry your reliever inhaler and/or GTN spray, if you have them. Use them as advised by your health care professional if you need them	Forget to take inhalers and GTN spray with you if you use them
Walk inside or try another aerobic exercise if you can't get out – examples are included in this section	Avoid exercising because the weather is bad or you're not in the mood!
Drink plenty of clear fluids – water or hot teas	Walk after a large meal
Cool down gradually when you've finished exercising – slow your walking speed or do the cooldown exercises	Stop suddenly without cooling down
Walk at the right speed so you are moderately breathless. Pace yourself when you walk on slopes and hills	Walk until you feel ready to drop or are too breathless to speak
Increase your walking time or speed gradually	Record a stroll as your training walk. You need to walk as briskly and for as long as you can to benefit
Use a stick or other walking aid if you need it	Walk or exercise alone if you feel unsteady
Hold on when doing the exercises below if you need to for safety	Take any risks with your safety!
Make sure any object you hold or sit on is stable and won't tip over	Use chairs or other objects that are not stable or fixed safely

Other aerobic exercises

On the next page, there are some more aerobic exercises you can do as well as walking – or instead of walking. Time all these exercises with a clock or stopwatch, as the aim is to increase the length of time you do them.

tip

You should feel moderately out of breath. Use the talk test on page 4 if you're unsure.

If you get too breathless, use the breathing positions at [blf.org.uk/breathlessness](https://www.blf.org.uk/breathlessness) to recover.

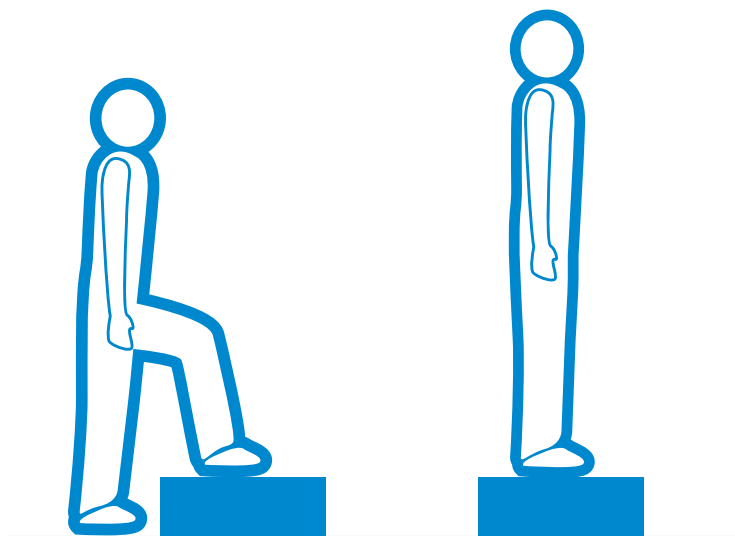
Step-ups

Stand in front of a step about six inches high, such as the bottom stair. Step up onto the step with one foot, then bring your other foot up to join it. Step back down again with your first foot and then the other one.

Level 1 – Repeat rhythmically, maintaining a steady pace. The rhythm should be like marching – right, left, right, left. After every 10, swap over to start the step-ups with your other leg.

Level 2 – increase the length of time or the speed of stepping up and down.

Level 3 – try carrying weights as you step up and down as if you were holding shopping.

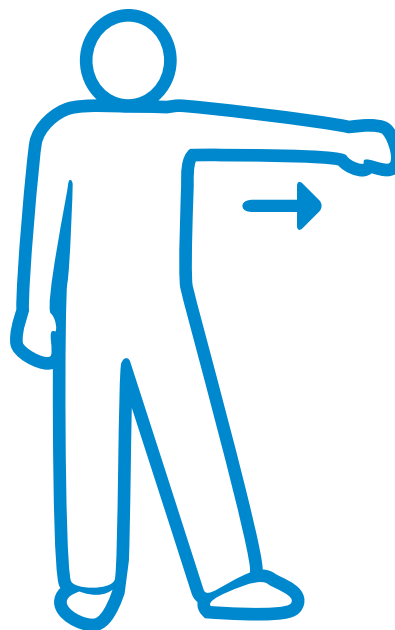


Star jacks

Level 1 – Tap your right leg out to the side. Bring your leg back to the middle. Repeat with your left leg. Try to keep a steady rhythm. If you get breathless, you can lean on the back of a chair.

Level 2 – raise your right arm out to the side as you tap your right foot, and bring your arm back to your side as you bring your leg back to the middle. Then use your left leg and arm together in the same way.

Level 3 – increase the length of time or the speed of exercise. Add a wrist or ankle weight.



Marching on the spot

Level 1 – March on the spot indoors.

Level 2 – add arm swings.

Level 3 – increase the time you spend marching or how quickly you march.

Exercise levels

The important thing is to exercise at the right level for you. All the exercises are shown at level 1. If you feel happy doing them, we've also suggested ways you could do more in levels 2 and 3.

How hard should I work?

It depends what you're doing! Here's a guide:

For **aerobic** activity you want to feel **moderately to somewhat severely breathless**. You may feel slightly sweaty and your heart will beat faster too. This is normal.

During **strengthening exercises**, you should work your muscles hard for a short time until the muscles feel tired. You may also get a 'burning' sensation which is normal.

Use this scale to help you to see how hard you need to work – the words and numbers describe how short of breath you feel:

0	Nothing at all
0.5	Very, very slight (just noticeable)
1	Very slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat severe
5	Severe
6	
7	Very severe
8	
9	Very, very severe
10	Maximal

But getting breathless makes me anxious!

It's normal to get breathless when you're active. But if you're living with a lung condition, you may feel anxious when this happens. The key is to stay calm and learn ways to manage your breathlessness.

Remember, getting breathless when you exercise is good for you! By becoming more active, your body can use oxygen better. This will actually help you to feel less out of breath when you do everyday tasks.

Try the breathing techniques at [blf.org.uk/breathlessness](https://www.blf.org.uk/breathlessness)

The talk test

During aerobic activity, a quick way to check if you're working at the right level for you is to say out loud:

'This activity is doing me good!'

- If you can say the sentence with one or two stops for breath, you're working at a moderate intensity. This is your aim.
- If you can say it comfortably without stopping, increase the intensity.
- If you can't speak or can't say more than one word at a time, slow down and try to get your breath back a little on the go. Don't stop suddenly.

How can I stay safe when I exercise?

It's very important to look after yourself while you're active. Make sure you:

- start slowly and gradually build up
- warm up before and cool down after exercising
- carry your reliever inhaler and/or glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray if you have them. Use them when you need to
- wear loose, comfortable clothing and supportive non-slip shoes, like trainers
- drink plenty of water and wait for at least an hour after eating before you exercise
- use oxygen at your regular setting when exercising (if you normally use oxygen, even for just some of the time or overnight)
- are active at a level that's safe and right for you as advised by your health care professional.
- talk to your health care professional if exercise makes your chest feel tight or wheezy. You may find it beneficial to take a reliever inhaler 5-20 minutes before your exercise session, but you should discuss this with your health care professional first.

Should exercise hurt?

Exercise should not hurt. Pain **during** an exercise (beyond the usual aches and pains that are normal for you) means you should stop that activity and perhaps try a different one. Muscle soreness **after** exercise is a normal response if you haven't exercised for a while. It should settle in a day or two. Avoid exercises that make them sore until it settles.

STOP if you get any sudden unpleasant symptoms including:

- chest pain or tightness that is either new for you, or not relieved by your GTN if you use it
- feeling dizzy, nauseous, clammy or cold
- feeling increasingly wheezy
- general extreme fatigue
- weakness in an arm or leg that is more than just a tired muscle

Get advice from your GP or another health care professional if you experience any of the above or call 999 in an emergency.

Taken from the BLF exercise handbook. Version 5.

Last reviewed: March 2021 Due for review: March 2024

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