

Strengthening or resistance exercises

Your exercise session has three parts:

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



Exercises marked with a star are also good for improving your coordination and balance.

Each exercise is done in sets of 10. We recommend you build up to a maximum of three sets for each exercise, resting for up to a minute between sets. So, the most you ever need to do of any strengthening exercise is 30 – or three times ten. Rest for at least a day between doing strength exercises.

Strong muscles increase your ability to be independent in your daily life, such as carrying shopping, gardening, doing DIY or climbing stairs.

Your muscles should feel they have worked somewhat hard after the first set of 10, and very hard after the last set. When you can do three sets easily, use a heavier weight next time. Your exercise trainer can help you get the best weight or resistance for you to begin with.

You may not feel short of breath when you do these exercises. They should make your muscles feel somewhat tired, rather than making you short of breath.

It is important to work hard enough to get your muscles stronger.

- Reduce the weight or resistance if you feel it's too hard
- Increase the weight or resistance if you find the exercise too easy

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

Always aim keep your body strong and steady during these exercises. Be careful not to bend backwards. Do all the exercises slowly and precisely to get the most out of them.

tip

Getting breathless?

Blow as you go: Time your breaths in and out to reduce the effort.

Breathe OUT on the hardest part of the exercise, for example, when you lift up your arms or a weight, or when you move your body, like stepping up or standing up, or taking your leg out to the side. Breathe IN as you relax and return to the start position.

Also remember the breathing positions at blf.org.uk/breathlessness



People with a lung condition have weak muscles because they are less active. This can make them even more breathless when they move, so simple activities feel hard. Strengthening exercises address this problem and have many benefits. These include being able to walk further, feeling fitter and less breathless, and being more confident with everyday life.

Julie, respiratory physiotherapist

tip

Remember to do each exercise in sets of 10. Aim for a maximum of 3 sets.

Sit to stand*

Level 1 – Use a sturdy chair with a back, such as a dining room chair. Sit forwards. Lean forward slightly, with your nose over your toes, and stand up slowly.

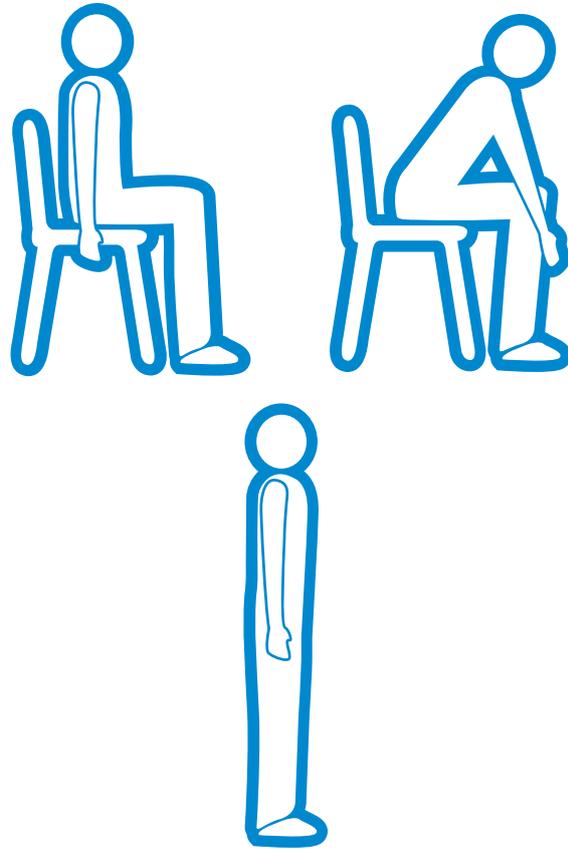
Sit back down slowly, aiming for perfect control.

The slower you can do this exercise the better. Make sure you keep your feet on the floor at all times.

If you can't stand up from the chair without using your arms, you can push with your arms to help.

Level 2 – do the exercise from a lower chair and make it even slower – like slow motion.

Level 3 – hold weights in your hands by your sides or a heavy book close to your chest. If you don't have weights, you could take a plastic container with a handle and fill it with water.



Wall push-offs

Level 1 – Stand facing a wall with your feet slightly apart about 1 foot away from the wall.

Place your hands on the wall at shoulder height.

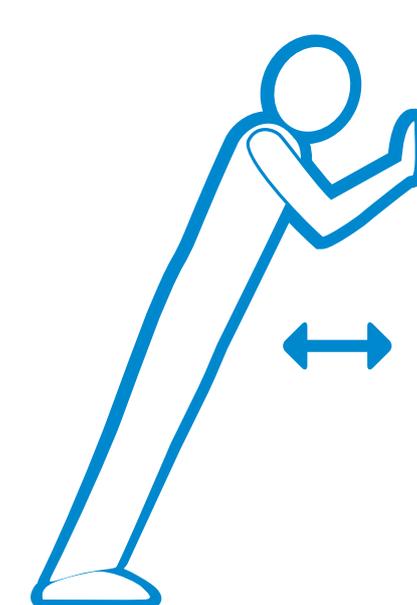
Keep your body straight at all times, from your head to your tail bone.

Slowly bend your elbows, taking your body closer to the wall.

Pause for a moment and then push back to your starting position.

Level 2 – stand further away from the wall.

Level 3 – do the exercise on tiptoes.

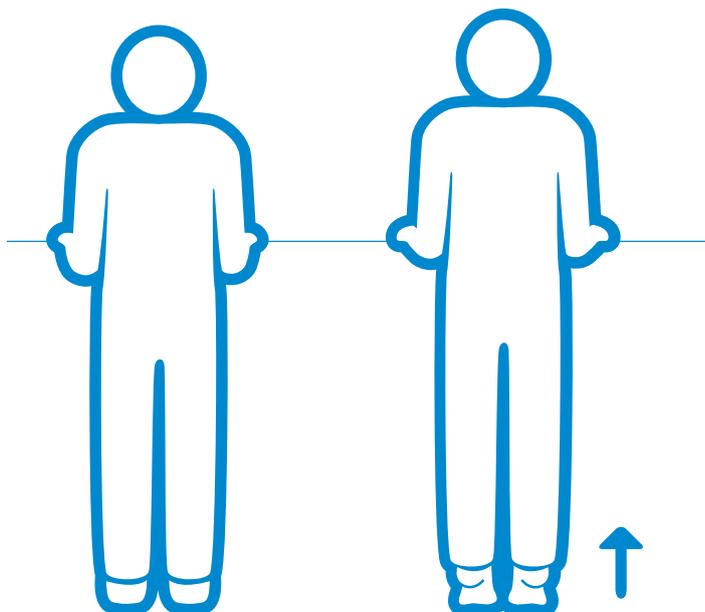


Heel raises *

Level 1 – Very gently rest your hands on a sturdy surface to help you balance, without putting any weight through your hands. Slowly rise up onto your tiptoes, then slowly lower down again.

Level 2 – Lower your heels in stages as you count slowly to four.

Level 3 – Stand on one leg at a time.



Arm punches

Level 1 – Sit or stand with your arms by your side. Bring your hands up to your chest.

Now straighten your arms out in front of you (position A).

Bring your hands back to your chest.

Repeat this action, going a little higher each time (positions B and C) until you are reaching up high as if you were reaching up to a high shelf.

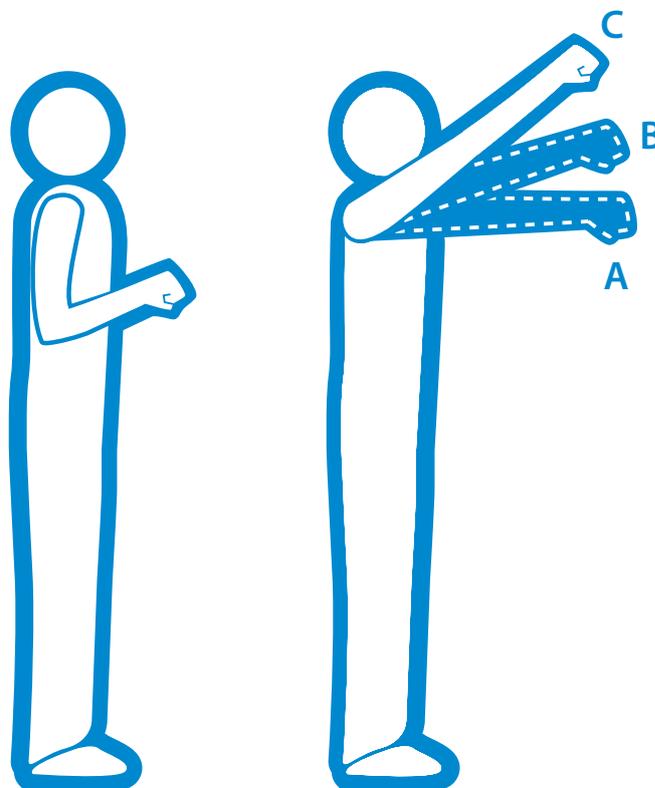
Then repeat it exactly in reverse, coming lower each time. Bring your hands back to your chest each time.

Finally, bring your hands back down to your sides.

You may find once is enough to start with.

Level 2 – hold a small weight in your hand – start with 0.5kg.

Level 3 – increase the weight as you feel ready.



Squats *

Level 1 – Stand with your feet slightly apart with your hands resting on the back of a sturdy chair or a table top.

Keeping your back straight, slowly bend your knees as far as you feel comfortable. Do not let them stick out further than your toes.

Make sure your hips stay higher than your knees, and your whole back is upright and not bent.

Pause for a moment, then slowly straighten your knees, returning to your starting position.

Level 2 – don't use a chair and bend your knees a little deeper.

Level 3 – hold weights in your hands down by your sides or a heavy book close to your chest.



Bicep curls

Level 1 – Sit and rest your elbows on a table. Hold weights in your hands with your palms facing upwards. If you don't have weights, you could take a plastic container and fill it with water.

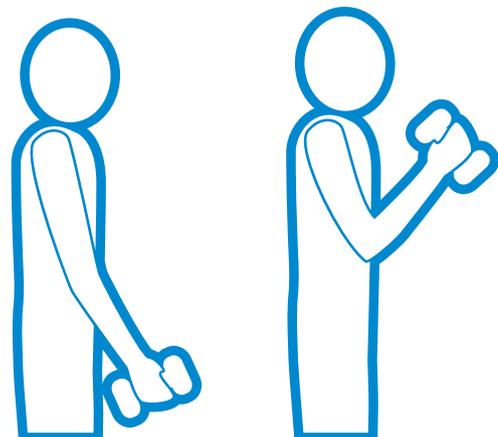
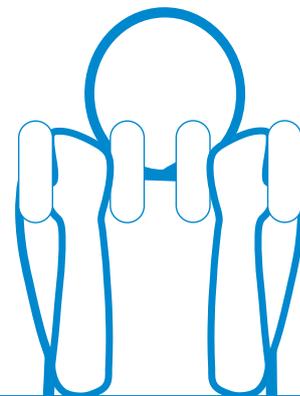
Gently bend one elbow, bringing the weight up towards your shoulder.

Slowly straighten your arm again and repeat with the other arm.

Breathe out as you lift the weight up and breathe in as you lower it.

Level 2 – stand to do the exercise and start with arms down by your side.

Level 3 – use both arms at the same time or increase the weight.



Exercises marked with a star are also good for improving your coordination and balance.

Hip extensions *

Level 1 – These are tiny movements. You should feel them in the muscles of your bottom and the back of your thigh.

Stand with your right leg slightly behind you, resting the ball of your foot on the ground. Keep your knee straight.

Gently lift your right foot one inch off the ground behind you. Keep your body upright and your leg straight.

Pause for a moment, then slowly lower your leg back down again. Repeat with your other leg.

Level 2 – hold the position for longer.

Level 3 – add an ankle weight.



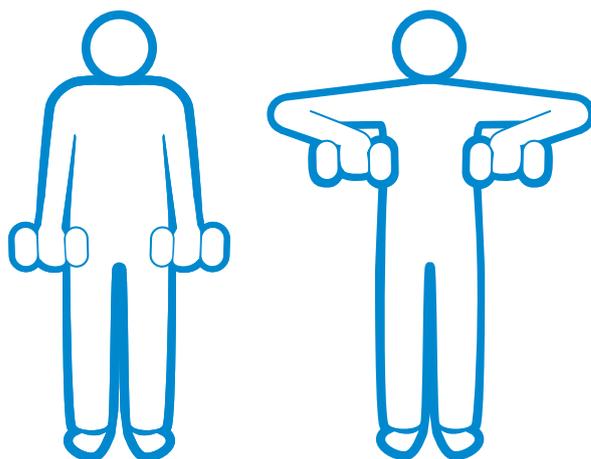
Upright rows

Level 1 – Sit or stand with your arms by your side. Hold weights in your hands, your palms downwards.

With your elbows out to the side, raise both your arms up to your shoulders and down again. Breathe out as you bring your arms up and breathe in as you lower them.

Level 2 – increase weight and stand.

Level 3 – increase weight again.



Knee extensions

Level 1 – Sit on a chair, feet side by side. Keeping your thighs on the chair, straighten one leg out in front at a time, bending at your knee.

Lower your foot back to its starting position.

Repeat up to 10 times with one leg.

Repeat with the other leg.

Level 2 – pause for three seconds when your leg is straight.

Level 3 – add an ankle weight - unless your skin is fragile or damaged.



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.

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