

Warm up and cool down

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. Hold on to a secure surface if you need to steady yourself during any of the exercises.

Warm up

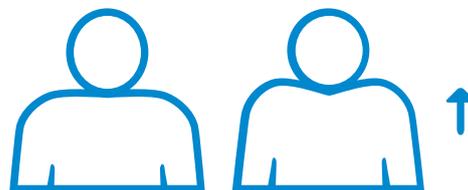
Try to warm up for 5-10 minutes. The aim is to gently move your joints and gradually raise your heart rate to increase the blood flow to your heart, lungs, and muscles. This gets your body ready for exercise and reduces the risk of injuring yourself or getting suddenly breathless. Towards the end of the warm-up you should feel slightly short of breath and a bit warmer.

You can do the warm-up either sitting or standing, whichever is right for you.

Shoulder shrugs

3 times up and down

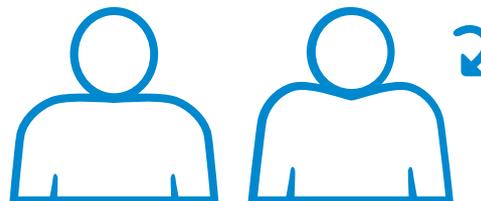
Slowly lift your shoulders towards your ears then lower them down again.



Shoulder circles

3 times each direction

Keep your arms down by your side, if standing, or on your lap if you're sitting. Slowly move your shoulders round in a circle backwards two to four times, then forwards two to four times.



Head turns

3 times each side

Slowly turn your head to the right. Bring your head back to the centre, then slowly turn to the left.



Head side bends

3 times each side

Slowly move your head down to the right, gently bringing your ear towards your right shoulder. Don't lift your shoulder up to meet your ear. Bring your head up to the middle. Repeat to the left.



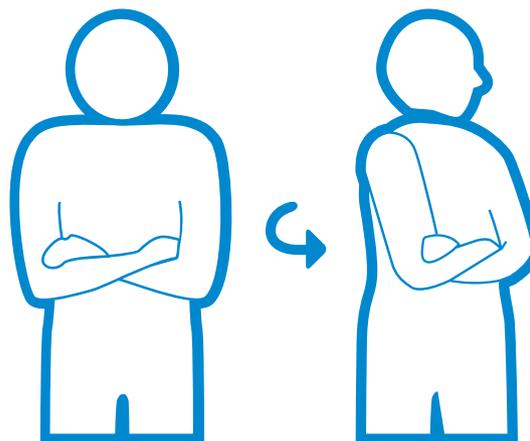
Trunk twists

3 times each side

Sit in a chair or stand with your feet apart and your arms folded in front of you.

Keep your hips still and facing forwards throughout this exercise.

Turn your shoulders, arms and head around to the right. Come back to the centre and then turn to the left. Make sure you twist from the waist – don't just move your arms side to side.

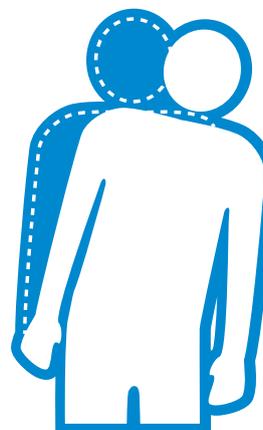


Side bends

3 times each side

Either standing or sitting, keep your body straight with your arms by your sides.

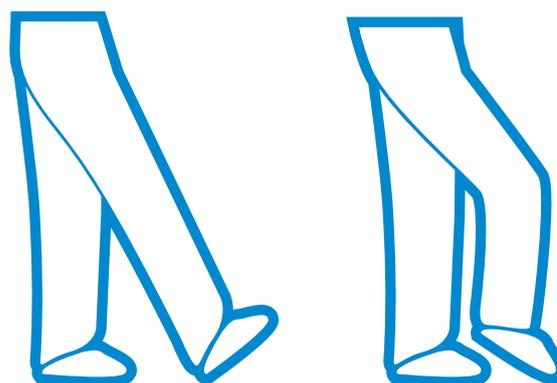
Slide one arm a short way towards the floor, bending sideways. Don't lean forwards or backwards at all. Return to your starting position, and repeat to the other side.



Ankle bends

3 times each leg

Either standing or sitting and using one foot at a time, alternately tap your toes and then your heel on the ground in front of you. Repeat with the other foot.



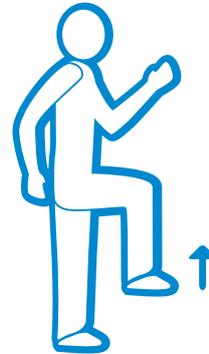
Warm up your heart and your muscles

This part of the warm-up should make you slightly out of breath. Stand to do these exercises if you can. You may need to hold on to a chair or use a wall for support and balance.

Knee lifts

Up to 1 minute

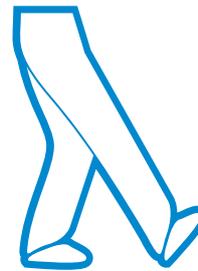
Slowly lift one knee up, to no higher than to your hip, then slowly lower again. Repeat with the other leg.



Heel digs forwards

Up to 1 minute

Tap one heel on the floor in front of you. Place your feet back together again and repeat with the other leg.



Toe taps behind

Up to 1 minute

Keep your body upright, take one foot out behind you and tap your toes on the floor. Bring your foot back to the middle and repeat with the other leg.



Finish your warm-up with gentle marching on the spot for one minute or until your breathing has returned to normal.

Cool down and stretch

To finish your exercise session safely, cool down so your heart rate gradually returns to normal. The cool-down involves moving your joints and gently stretching the muscles you've used when exercising.

Cool down until your heart rate and breathing have both returned to normal.

Walking or gentle marching on the spot

A good way to start cooling down is to walk slowly around the room as you come to the end of your exercise. Or you could march slowly on the spot, for about two minutes.

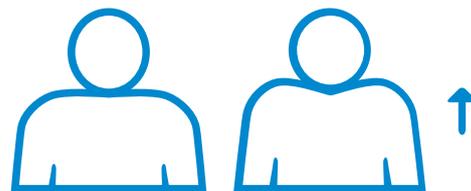
Moving your joints

You can do this by doing the first few warm-up exercises of the neck and shoulders:

Shoulder shrugs

3 times up and down

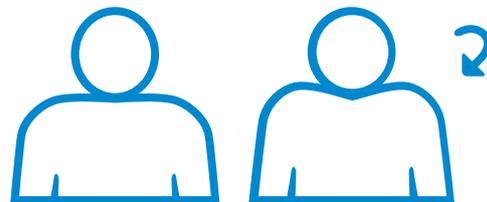
Slowly lift your shoulders towards your ears then lower them down again.



Shoulder circles

3 times each direction

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Head turns

3 times each side

Slowly turn your head to the right. Bring your head back to the centre, then slowly turn to the left.



Head side bends

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Stretches

Now it's time to stretch.

Stretching helps to reduce any aching or soreness you may feel in your muscles in the day or two after exercise. Stretching also improves your flexibility. None of these stretches should be painful – you should just feel a slight stretch.

If you can't do every stretch here, just do the ones you can. If you did pulmonary rehabilitation or another exercise class, do the stretches you were shown by your trainer.

Try to hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds. You can stand or sit to stretch.

Side stretch

Stand or sit with your feet apart. Reach your right arm up to the ceiling, then lean over slightly to the left. You should feel a slight stretch down the right-hand side of your body.

Return to the starting position and repeat with the left arm.



Tricep or shoulder stretch

Put your right arm out in front of you then, keeping your arm straight, bring it across your body at shoulder height.

Use your left hand to squeeze your right arm towards you until you feel a slight stretch around your right shoulder and the back of your upper arm.

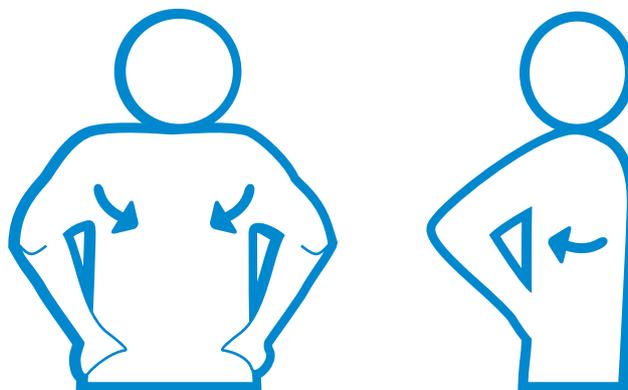
Repeat with the left arm.



Chest stretch

Sit or stand up tall. Place your hands on the lower part of your back or hips.

Pull your shoulders back and squeeze your elbows together behind you. You should feel a slight stretch in the muscles across the front of your chest.



Reminder. Try to hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds.

Hamstring stretch

Sit on the edge of a chair, with your back straight and feet flat on the floor. Place your right leg out in front of you, keeping it straight.

Place your hands on your left thigh for support.

Bend forwards slightly from your hips, keeping your back straight, until you can feel a slight stretch down the back of the right leg.

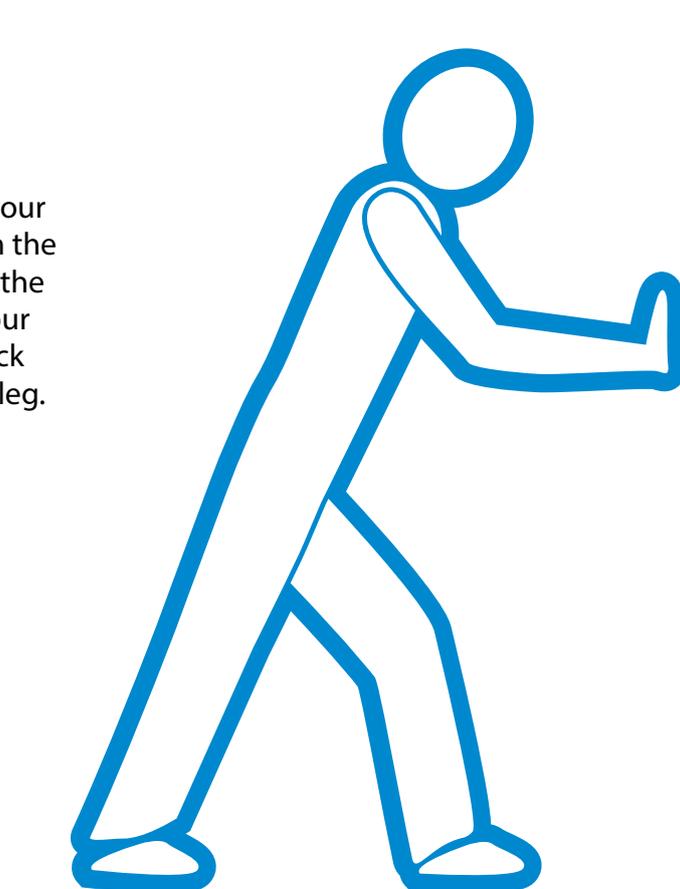
Repeat with the left leg.



Calf stretch

Stand with your feet apart, holding on to something sturdy, such as a wall.

Keep your body upright. Step one leg out behind you, keeping both feet pointing forwards. Bend your front knee, keeping your back knee straight and your heel firmly on the ground. You should feel a slight stretch in the calf of your back leg. If you don't, move your back foot further away. Bring your feet back together again and repeat with the other leg.



Quads or thigh stretch

If you have knee or balance problems, do the sitting option.

Level 1 Sitting option

Sit near the front of a sturdy chair that won't tip over. Move your bottom carefully to the left side of the chair so that only your right bum cheek is on the chair. Slide your left foot behind you so that your knee is pointing down to the floor.

Aim for a straight line from your shoulder to your knee. Repeat with the other leg.



Level 2-3 Standing option

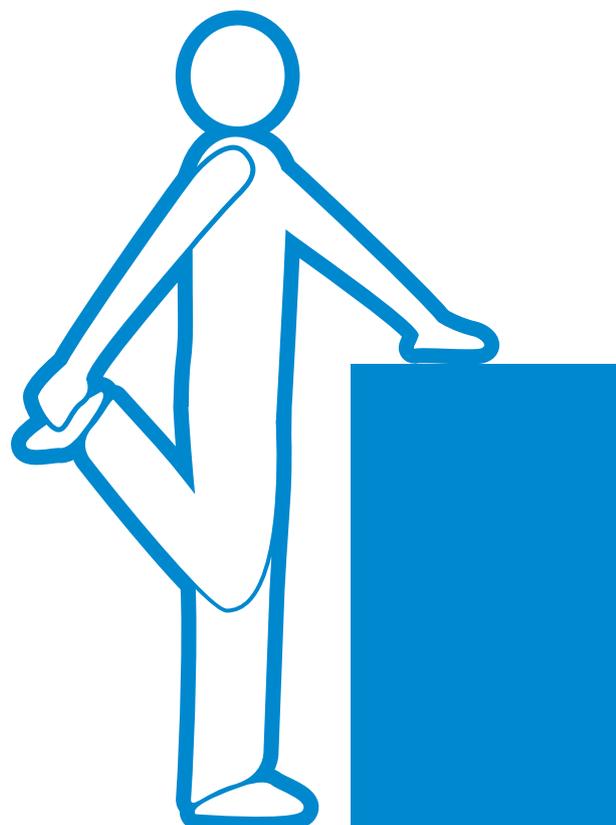
Stand behind a chair and turn to the right, holding on to the back of the chair with your left hand. You could also use a wall for support.

Bend your right leg up behind you and, with your right hand, hold on to either your ankle or the back of your trouser leg.

Take your foot towards your bottom, with your knees together and your back upright.

Aim to make a straight line from your right shoulder to your right knee.

You should feel a slight stretch down the front of your thigh. Turn to face the other way and repeat with the other leg.



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