



MY
KEEP ACTIVE
HANDBOOK

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Welcome to your Keep Active handbook

This handbook gives you advice on how to stay safe when you're active, has guidance on breathing techniques to help you when you're active, and offers a choice of exercise routines. There are also resources you can use to set your goals and track your activity over time.

We've put this handbook together with healthcare professionals, expert fitness instructors, and people living with lung conditions. This handbook is for anyone living with a lung condition, whether that's asthma, COPD, bronchiectasis, pulmonary fibrosis, long COVID, or any other lung condition.

Keeping active with your lung condition can sometimes feel daunting, and you might not know how to get started. If you're waiting for, or have finished a pulmonary rehabilitation (PR) course, or just want some activities you can do easily at home, using this handbook can be a great way to get moving in your own time at a pace that suits you.

Regular movement is good for your lungs because it increases the strength of the muscles around your lungs and the rest of your body. As you build strength, your muscles will need less oxygen to work. This means you will be able to breathe more easily when you're active. Being active can also help you sleep better and improve your mental health and wellbeing.

You can also watch our Keep Active videos online at:
asthmaandlung.org.uk/keep-active-programme

Safety advice

Before you start any physical activity, speak to your healthcare professional to make sure it's safe for you.

- Start slowly and build up gradually. Be active at a level that's right for you.
- If you have a reliever inhaler, always carry it with you and use it when you need to. If you have a GTN spray, have this with you as well.
- If you normally use oxygen therapy when you move, then make sure to use it on your usual setting for the exercises. Ensure you have enough oxygen to complete the session. Speak to your oxygen team if you have any concerns.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and supportive non-slip shoes, like trainers.
- It's a good idea to wait around 1-2 hours after eating a meal or 30 minutes after eating a snack before you start doing any physical activity.
- Have some water close by when you're active.



Stop exercising and get advice from your healthcare professional if you get any of these symptoms:

- Chest pain or chest tightness
- You feel more breathless than you usually would when being active
- Dizziness
- Feeling sick
- Clammy or feeling really cold
- Wheezing
- Sore joints or muscle weakness.

How should I feel when I'm active?

When you're strengthening your muscles, like in our 'Feeling stronger with your lung condition' routine, work until your muscles feel tired. You might get a burning sensation in your muscles, which is normal.

When you're doing aerobic activity, such as our 'Feeling energised with your lung condition' routine, you should aim to feel quite out of breath.

The Talk Test

When you're active, a quick way to check if you're working at the right level for you is to do the Talk Test. Say out loud: 'This activity is doing me good!' while moving.

- 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.



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



Dr Andy Whittamore,
Asthma + Lung UK's GP.

Breathing techniques to help you when you're active

There are a number of breathing techniques that you can use when you're active. You can also watch our videos to help you practice these techniques at asthmaandlung.org.uk/managing-breathlessness

Techniques to help you manage your breathing

These techniques can help you manage your breathing when you're exercising, moving around, lifting things, or generally exerting yourself.

Try all of them and see which one works best for you. Practice them regularly so they become a habit when you move.

Blow as you go

This is where you breathe in before you make the effort, and breathe out as you're making the effort. For example, walking up some stairs:

1. Breathe in before you make the step up.
2. Breathe out as you're stepping up.

Pursed lips

This is where you breathe out with your lips pursed. For example, while making any effort:

1. Breathe in gently through your nose.
2. Breathe out with your lips pursed, as if you're blowing out a candle.
3. Breathe out for as long as is comfortable. Don't force your lungs to empty.

Paced breathing

Paced breathing is when you count to yourself as you walk or move. For example:

1. As you move, breathe in for one step.
2. Then, breathe out as you take two steps.

You can try this in a pattern that's comfortable for you. For example, you might want to try two steps when breathing in, and two steps when breathing out. Try different patterns to find what works best for you.

You can use it at the same time as the pursed lips breathing or blow as you go techniques, to help control your breath.

Techniques to help you get your breath back

These breathing techniques and positions can help you recover when you're feeling breathless. They can also help if you're feeling anxious. Try all of them and see which works best for you. Practice them regularly so they become a habit when you're breathless.

Breathing control

Breathing control is healthy, relaxed breathing into the bottom of your lungs using your main breathing muscle (the diaphragm).

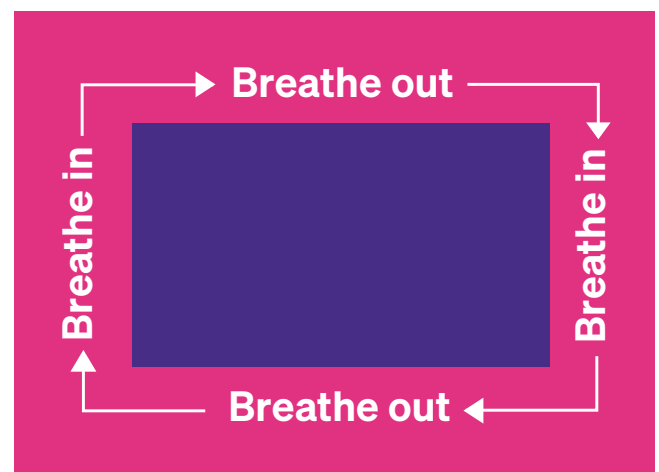
1. Get into a comfortable position sitting down.
2. Let your shoulders and body relax.
3. Place one hand on your chest and one on your tummy.
4. Breathe in gently through your nose, going as deep as is comfortable. You should feel your tummy pushing out.
5. Breathe out through your nose or mouth. You should feel your tummy sink back in.

Keep breathing and try to let go of any tension in your body. Start with a few minutes and build up to practising this for 10 minutes if you can.

Rectangle breathing

This technique helps you to recover your breath by slowing down your breathing. Wherever you are, you'll see a rectangle shape, whether that's a TV, a book, or a window.

1. Follow the sides of the rectangle with your eyes.
2. Take a breath in when following the short side of the rectangle.
3. Take a breath out when following the long side of the rectangle.



Positions to help you recover when you get out of breath

Leaning on an object

If you're breathless and can't sit down anywhere, it can be helpful to recover your breath by leaning against an object, like a wall.

1. Keep your back straight and bend your knees slightly.
2. Try to relax your hands, wrists, shoulders, neck and jaw.
3. Focus on rectangle breathing while you're leaning.



Sitting on a chair

Sitting on a chair, leaning forward, can help you to get your breath back.

1. Sit on a chair, with your legs hip width apart and shoulders relaxed.
2. Lean forwards and rest your arms on your legs.
3. Breathe with controlled or rectangle breathing.



High side lying

It may also help you to get your breath back by lying down on your side and propping your head up with pillows.

1. Lie down on a bed and make sure that you're fully over on your side.
2. Bend your knees forwards.
3. Ensure your head is resting on a few pillows, so that you're slightly upright.
4. Breathe with controlled or rectangle breathing.



Keep Active programme

Follow our Keep Active programme in three simple steps. To help you stay well with your lung condition, make sure you've read the safety advice on page 4 and always complete the warm up and cool down.

1. Complete the warm up.
2. Select one or both routines:
 - Feeling stronger with your lung condition
 - Feeling energised with your lung condition.
3. Complete the cool down and stretch.

Fill in the My goals form on page 28 to help you think about the progress you'd like to make. Then track your activities using My activity record on page 29.

What activity is right for me?

If you want to work on feeling stronger, choose the 'feeling stronger with your lung condition' routine. This can help you with everyday tasks like carrying shopping or getting up off the sofa.

If you want to work on getting out of breath on purpose, working your heart and lungs, choose the 'feeling energised with your lung condition' routine. This can boost your mood and help you maintain a healthy body weight.

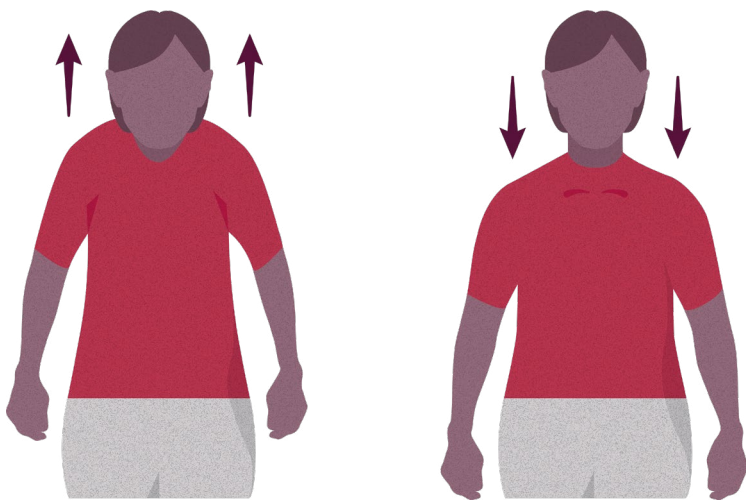
Always complete the warm up and cool down and take a rest if you need to.

Warm up

The aim of this warm up is to gently move your body 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.

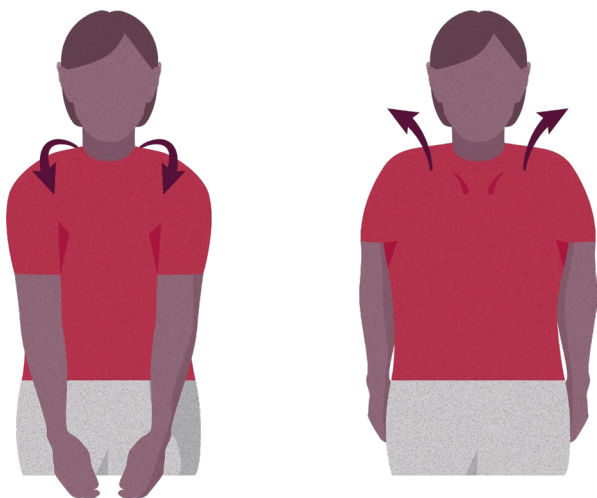
You can do the warm up either sitting or standing, whichever is right for you.

Shoulder shrugs



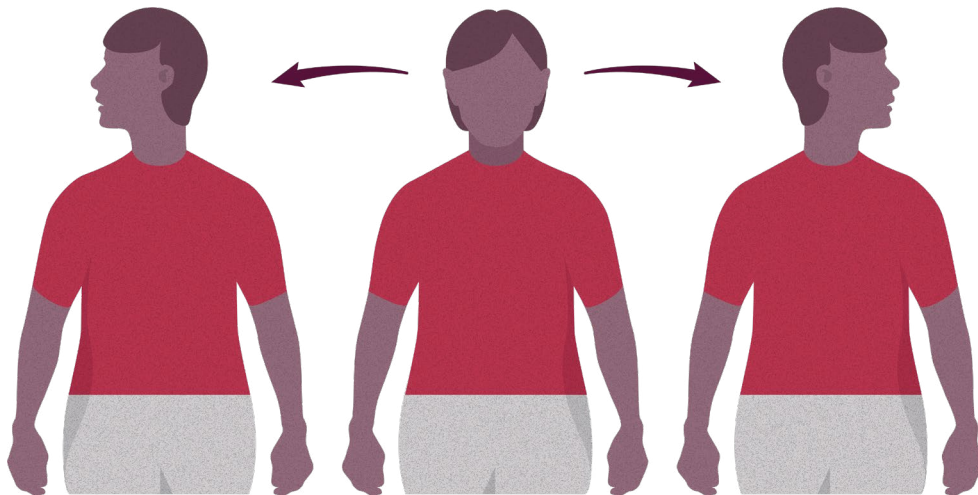
Lift your shoulders up towards your ears, then lower them down. Repeat 10 times.

Shoulder rolls



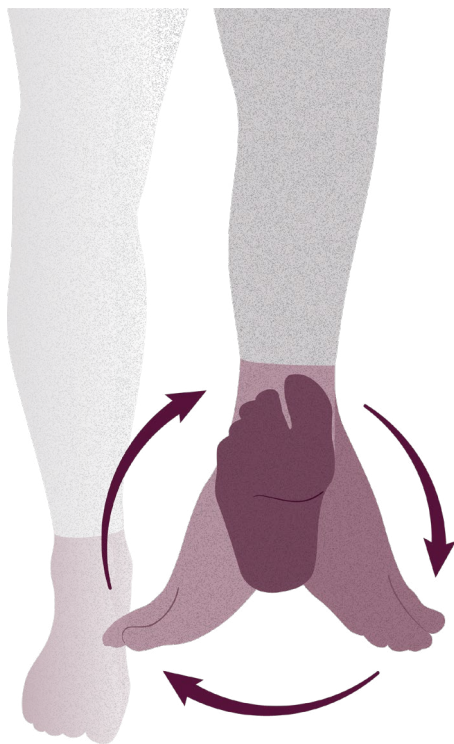
Circle your shoulders forwards 10 times. Then, circle your shoulders backwards 10 times.

Head turns



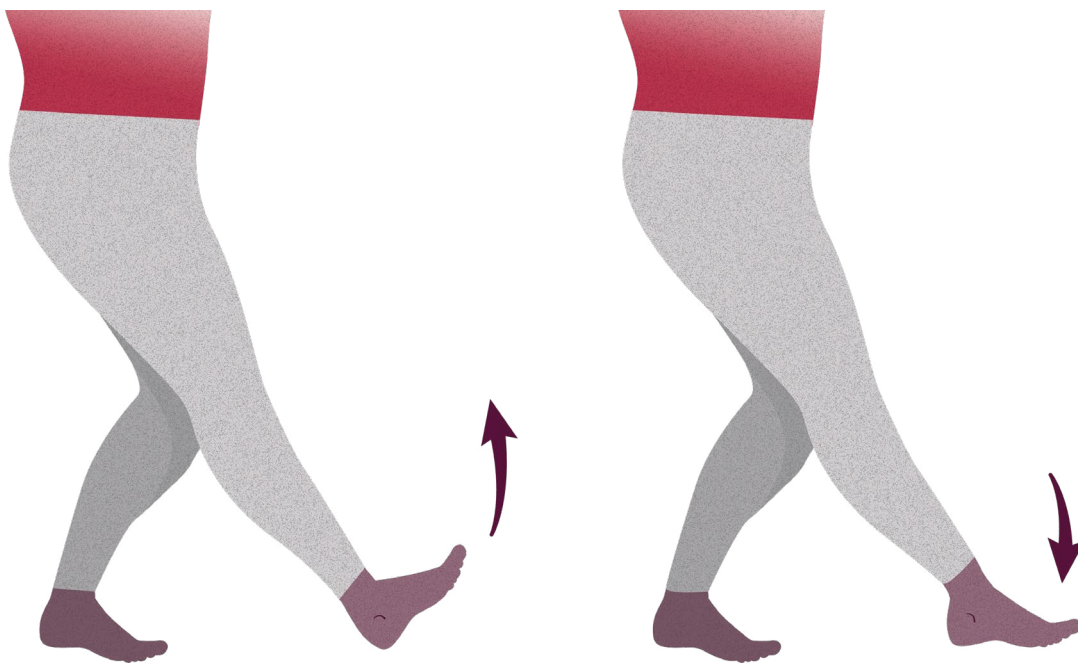
Turn your head to the right and bring it back to the centre. Then, turn your head to the left and bring it back to the centre. Repeat 10 times.

Ankle rotations



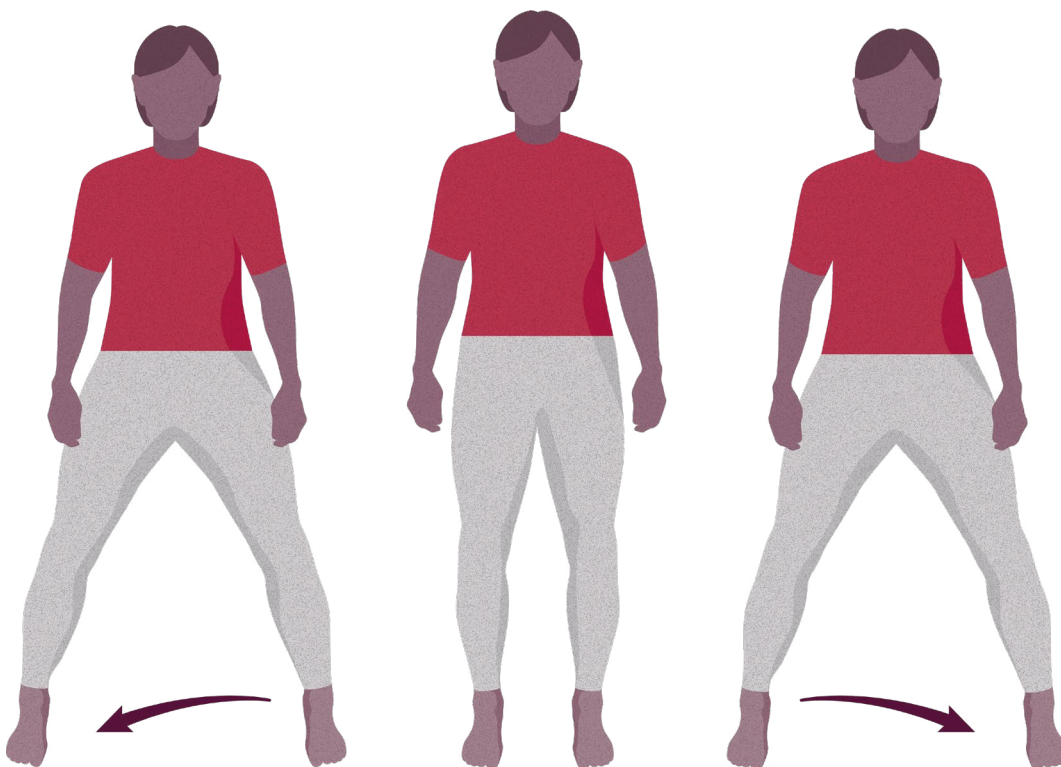
Turn your ankle in circles, making sure to go in both directions. Repeat this 10 times for each ankle.

Ankles up and down



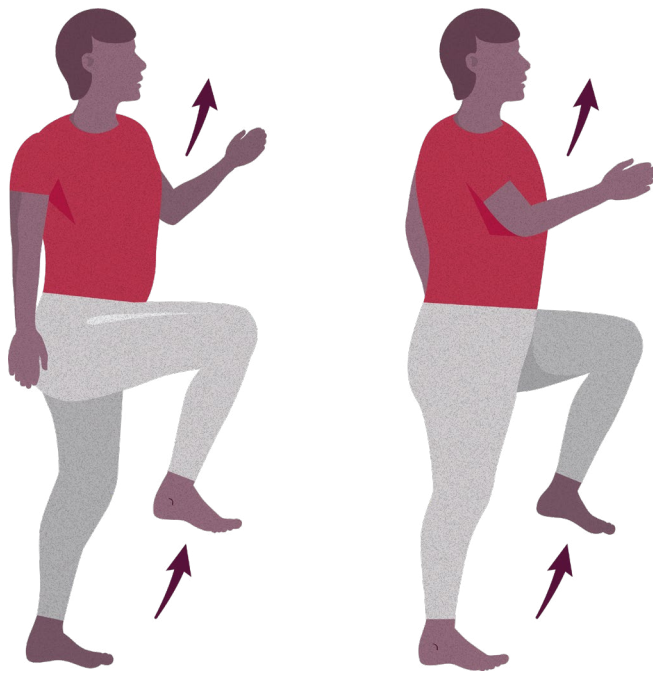
Bend your ankle up and slowly bring it down. Repeat this 10 times for each ankle.

Side stepping



Step to the side on the left, then come back to the middle. Step to the side on the right, then come back to the middle. Repeat this 10 times for each leg.

Marching on the spot



March on the spot at a medium or fast pace. Then bring it back down to a gentle march. Do this for one minute.



Now that you've finished the warm up, choose a routine to follow based on how you feel today. We have a routine to build your strength on page 14 and a routine to work your heart and lungs on page 19.

Feeling stronger with your lung condition

After you've completed the warm up, and if you want to feel stronger, try this routine. We have also suggested three different levels to work at depending on how you feel today. Repeat each exercise 10 times.

Exercises marked with a ✖ are also great for improving balance and flexibility.

Sit to stand ✖



1. Sit at the edge of a chair with your back straight and feet hip width apart.
2. Lean forwards with your nose over your toes.
3. Push up, and stand up trying not to use your hands as you do this.
4. Sit back down as controlled as possible.

Level 1 – If you need a more gentle routine today, you can stand behind a stable chair and hold it while doing some shallow squats.

Level 2 – If you feel like building your strength today, you can try sitting further back in your chair when you start.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, you can try doing this while holding some weights. You could use tins from the cupboard.

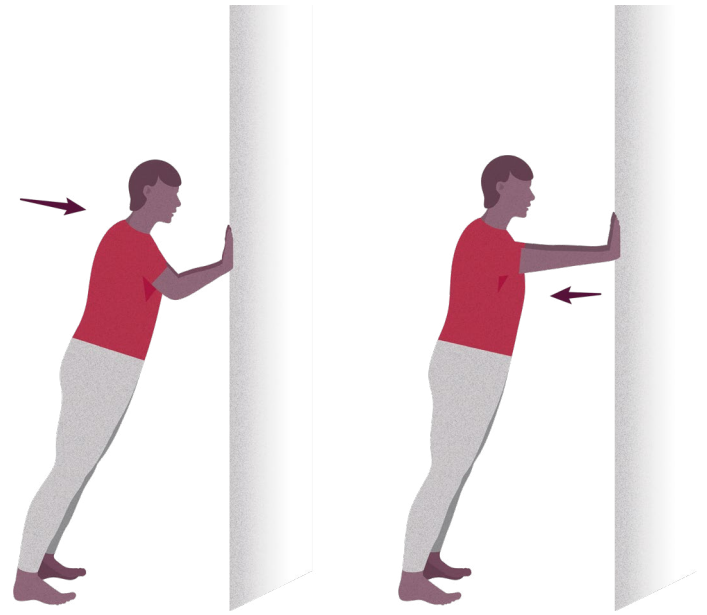
Wall push off

1. Sit or stand with your back straight and feet hip width apart.
2. Place your hands against a wall at shoulder height.
3. Bend your elbows and lean into the wall.
4. Touch your nose to the wall and push away.

Level 1 – If you need a more gentle routine today, you can try this sitting down.

Level 2 – If you feel like building your strength today, follow the exercise standing.

Level 3 – If you feel strong and confident today, you can try this standing further back from the wall or stand on the tip of your toes.



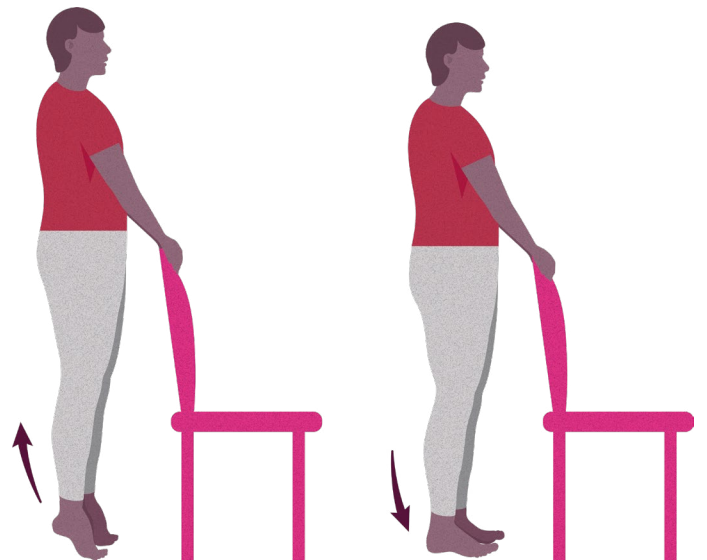
Heel raises *

1. Sit or stand with your back straight and your feet hip width apart.
2. Place your fingertips on to a surface for support.
3. Slowly lift your heels.
4. Slowly return them back to the ground.

Level 1 – If you'd like a more gentle routine today, try this seated.

Level 2 – If you'd like to build your strength today, try this standing.

Level 3 – If you're feeling confident and strong today, try this standing up without any support.



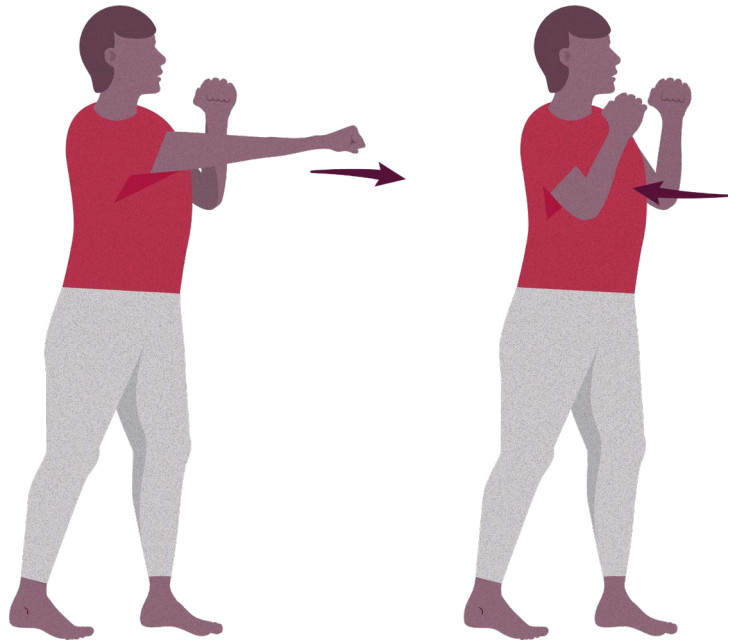
Arm punches

1. Sit or stand with your back straight and feet hip width apart.
2. Put your arms out in front of you at shoulder height.
3. Put your hands into fists and bring your arms in and out slowly.

Level 1 – If you'd like a more gentle routine today, try this seated.

Level 2 – If you're building your strength today, try this standing.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, try this with some small weights, like tins from the cupboard.



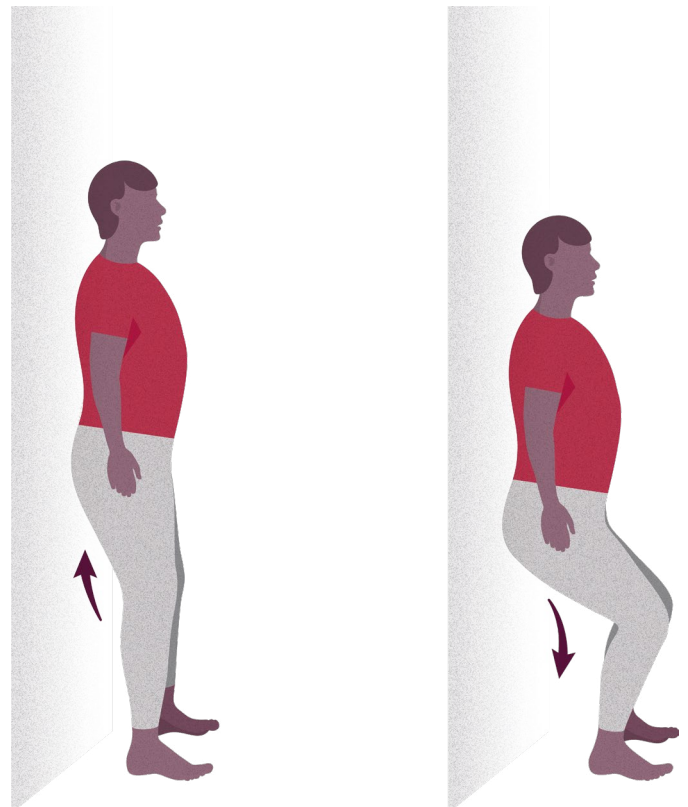
Wall slides

1. Stand against a wall with your back straight and feet hip width apart.
2. Keep your arms relaxed.
3. Slide down the wall, bending your knees as you go.

Level 1 – If you feel like doing a more gentle routine today, try sitting down and lifting one foot off the floor and holding, then kicking your leg out and bringing it back in.

Level 2 – If you're building your strength today, try this standing.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, try holding for a few moments against the wall. You could bend your knees deeper or hold some weights too.



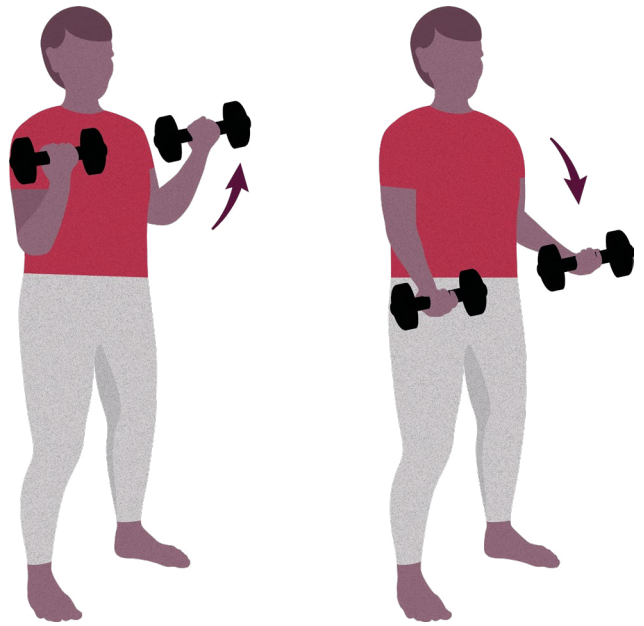
Bicep curls

1. Sit or stand with your back straight and feet hip width apart.
2. Keep your elbows close to your waist.
3. Raise a small weight, like a tin of food, in each hand towards your body.

Level 1 – If you'd like a gentle routine today, sit down and raise one weight at a time rather than both together, or try a lighter weight.

Level 2 – If you feel like building your strength today, try the routine standing.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, try raising some heavier weights.



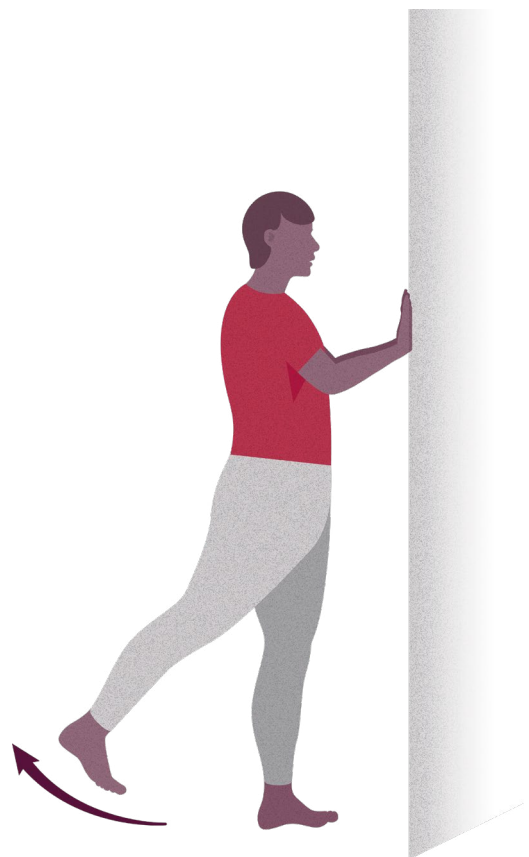
Hip extensions *

1. Sit or stand up straight with your feet hip width apart.
2. Place your fingertips on a surface in front of you.
3. Slowly lengthen your leg behind you.
4. Slowly return your leg to your standing position, try to avoid leaning forwards.
5. Repeat with the other leg.

Level 1 – If you need a gentle routine today, try this sitting down, but push both feet down towards the floor, as if you're gripping something to the floor.

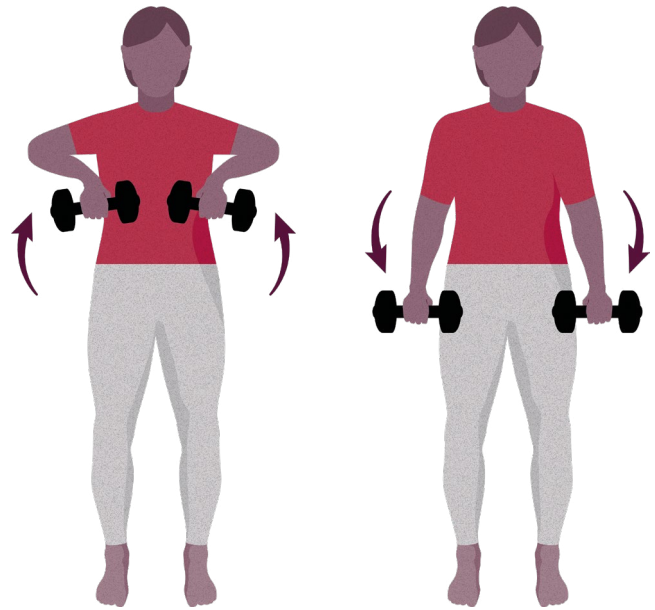
Level 2 – If you feel like building your strength today, follow this exercise standing.

Level 3 – If you feel strong and confident today, try this exercise standing but not leaning against a surface, or you could hold the position for longer.



Upright row

1. Sit or stand with your back straight.
2. Keep your feet hip width apart and flat on the floor.
2. Hold your weights, like tins or water bottles, in front of your body.
3. Raise both weights towards your armpits.
4. Lower the weights back to the start position.



Level 1 – If you need a gentle routine today, you can sit down and raise one weight at a time or use both hands to hold one weight.

Level 2 – If you feel like building your strength today, try the exercise standing.

Level 3 – If you feel strong and confident today, try lifting some heavier weights, and raise them to your shoulders instead of your armpits.

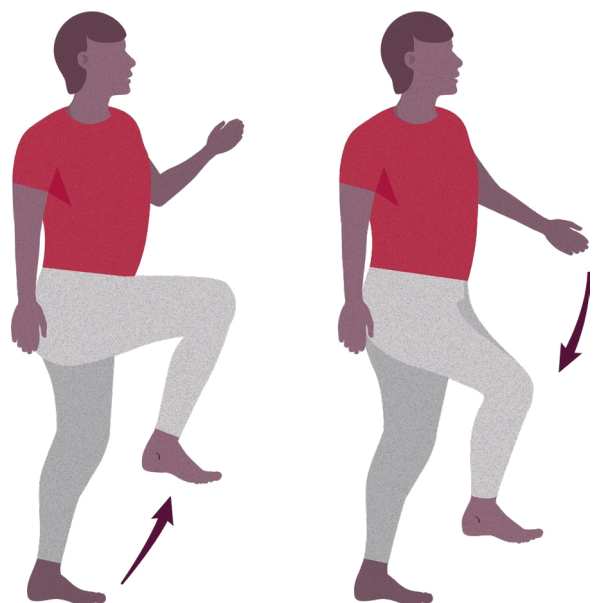
Knee lifts

1. Sit or stand with your back straight and feet hip width apart.
2. If you're seated, make sure you're at the front of the chair.
3. Raise your legs and lower them slowly.

Level 1 – If you'd like a gentle routine today, try this seated.

Level 2 – If you're building your strength today, try marching on the spot lifting one knee at a time, while holding a surface for support.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, try this standing without any surface for support.



Now that you've finished this routine, why not try the next routine on page 19, or skip straight to the cool down and stretch on page 22.

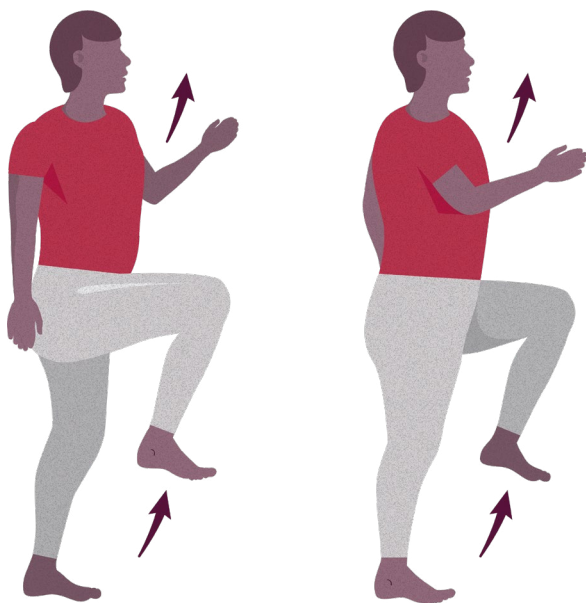
Feeling energised with your lung condition

After you've completed the warm up, and if you're looking to get out of breath on purpose and work your heart and lungs, try this routine. We have suggested three different levels to work at depending on how you feel today.

Exercises marked with a ✳ are also great for improving balance and flexibility.

Marching on the spot

Try this for one minute.



1. Stand or sit upright with your feet hip width apart.
2. Lift your knees in front of you, marching on the spot at a medium or fast pace.
3. Lift your leg with your knee bent as far as comfortable.
4. Place your foot down with control.
5. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Level 1 – If you'd like a gentle routine today, try this sitting down.

Level 2 – If you're building your strength today, try this standing and swing your arms.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, try swinging your arms bigger. You could also increase the time you spend marching or how quickly you march.

Leg slides to the side *

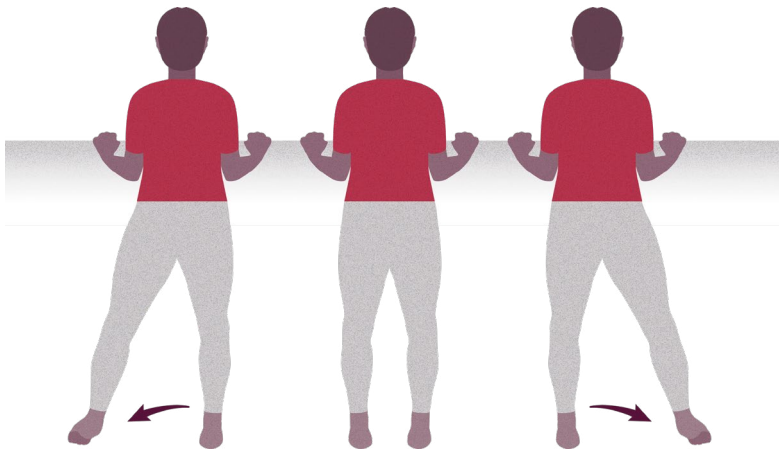
Repeat this 10 times for each leg.

1. Sit or stand facing a stable surface with your feet together and toes facing forwards.
2. Press your hands down on the surface.
3. Without raising your shoulders, slide one leg out a few inches to the side.
4. Bring the leg back and relax your arms.
5. Repeat with the other leg.

Level 1 – If you need a gentle routine today, try this sitting down and stepping your leg out to the side, trying not to lean with the movement.

Level 2 – If you're building your strength today, try this standing up.

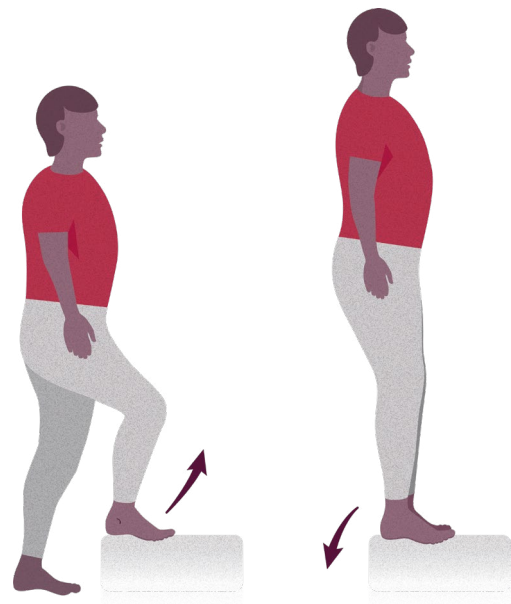
Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, try doubling the amount of sets you do.



Step ups

Repeat this 10 times.

1. Stand in front of a step about six inches high, such as the bottom of a set of stairs.
2. Step up onto the step with one foot.
3. Bring your other foot up to join it.
4. Step back down with one foot, and then the other.
5. Repeat and maintain a steady pace.



Level 1 – If you need a gentle routine today, try this sitting down. Tap each foot up to a step in front of you.

Level 2 – If you're building your strength today, try this standing up.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, try increasing the speed of your step ups.

Star jacks

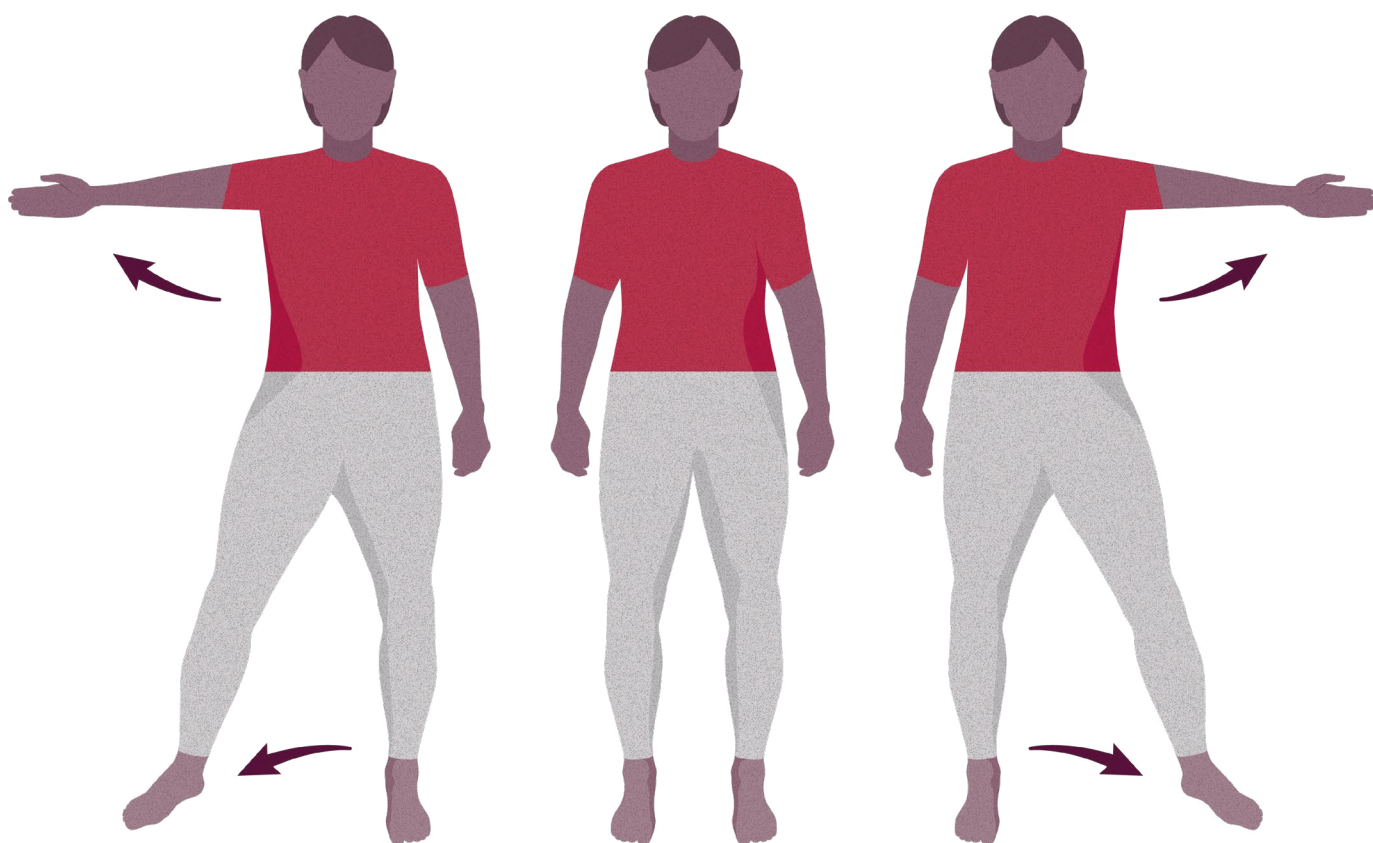
Repeat this 10 times.

1. Sit or stand up straight.
2. Tap your left leg out to the side and raise you left arm at the same time.
3. Bring your leg back to the middle and lower you arm.
4. Repeat this with your right leg and arm.
5. Try to keep a steady rhythm going.

Level 1 – If you need a gentle routine today, try this sitting down.

Level 2 – If you're building your strength today, try this standing up.

Level 3 – If you're feeling strong and confident today, increase the time you spend doing this exercise or increase the speed.



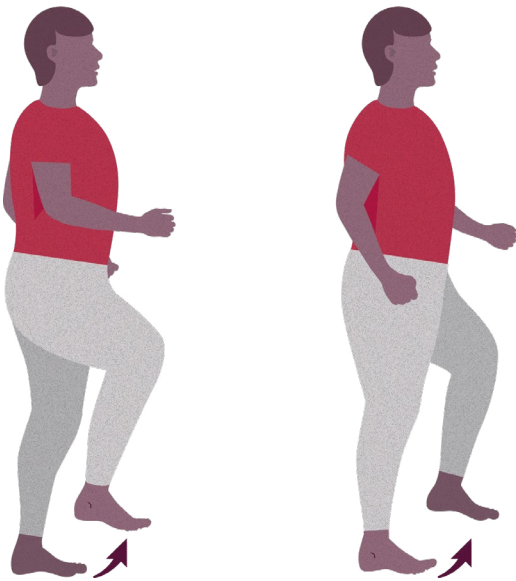
Now that you've finished this routine, try the strengthening routine on page 14 if you've not already done it, or skip straight to the cool down and stretch on page 22.

Cool down and stretch

It's very important to cool down and stretch to lower your heart rate. You can do these movements seated or standing. Try the stretches for about 20 seconds each.

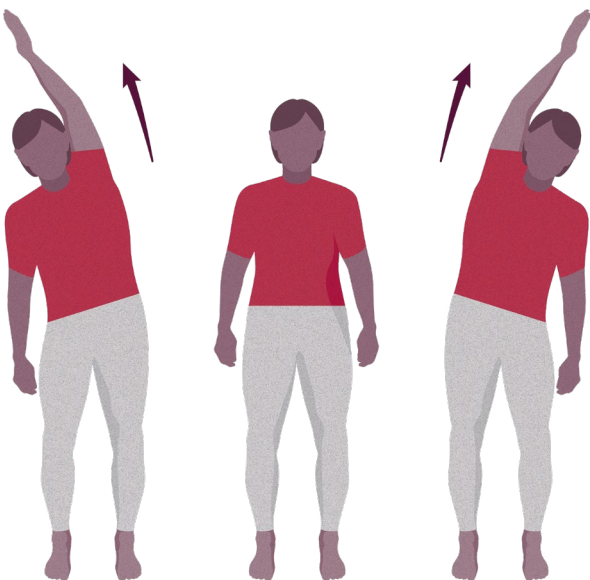
Walking on the spot

Gently walk on the spot for around two minutes. Add in some heel digs or toe taps to stretch your ankles.



Side stretch

Reach your left arm above your head, then lean over to the right. You should feel a slight stretch down the right hand side of your body. Repeat this with your right arm.



Quad stretch

Standing option

Stand behind a stable surface and hold on for support with your left hand. 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.

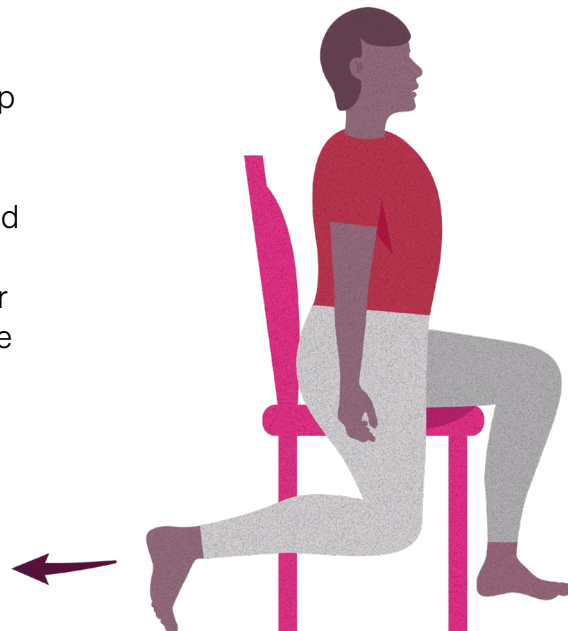
Bring your foot towards your bottom, with your knees together and your back upright. Aim to make a straight line from your right shoulder to your right knee. You should feel a slight stretch down the front of your thigh. Repeat with the other leg.



Quad stretch

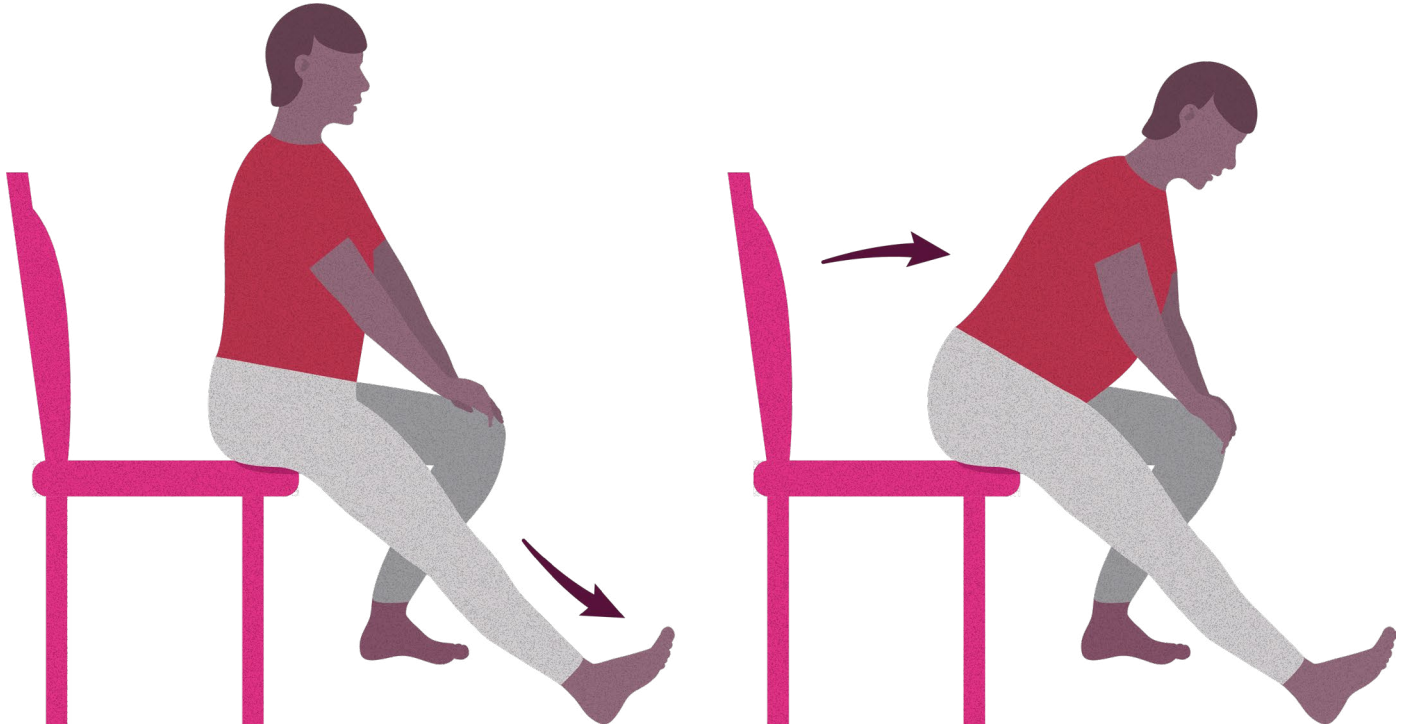
Sitting option

Sit near the front of a sturdy chair that won't tip over. Move your bottom carefully to the right side of the chair so that only your left 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. Move your bottom to the left side of the chair and repeat with the other leg.



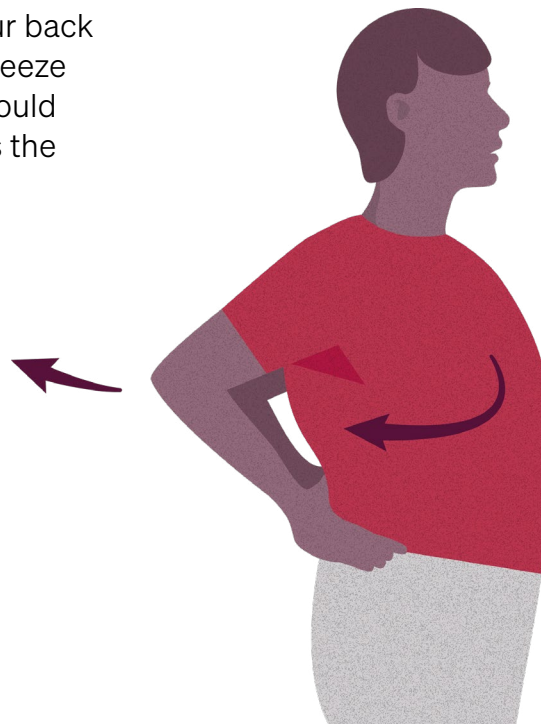
Hamstring stretch

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.



Chest opener

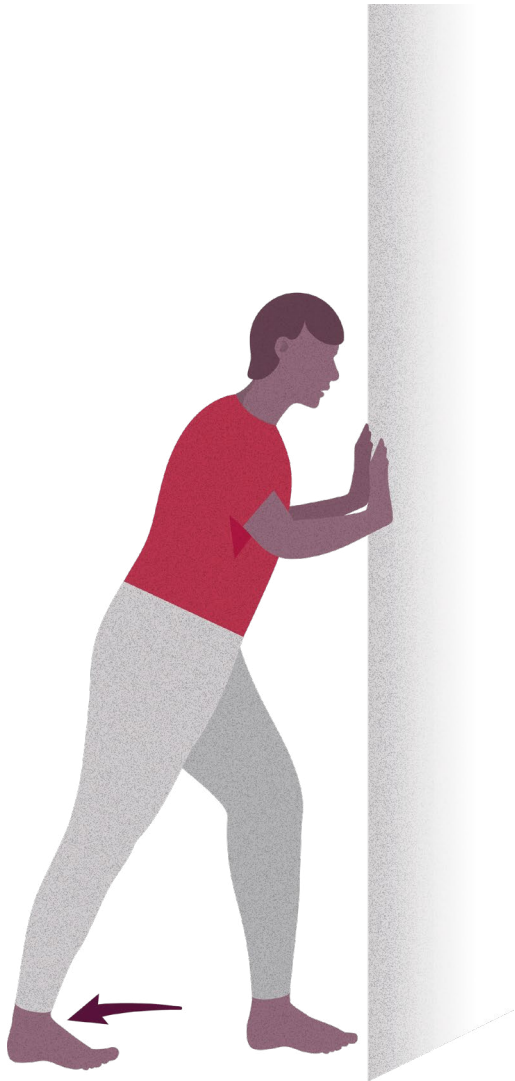
Place your hands on the lower part of your back or hips. Pull your shoulders back and squeeze your elbows together behind you. You should feel a slight stretch in the muscles across the front of your chest.



Calf stretch

Stand with your feet apart, leaning 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 back knee, keeping your front leg straight and your heel firmly on the ground.

You should feel a slight stretch in the calf of your front leg. If you don't, move your front foot further away. Bring your feet back together again and repeat with the other leg.



Other activities

All these activities are great for people with lung conditions, and you should be fine to do them as long as you follow the safety advice on page 4.

Getting your heart rate up

Aerobic activities warm up your body, make your heart beat faster, and make you breathe quicker and deeper. This strengthens your breathing muscles and makes it easier to breathe. Try to do some aerobic activities at least twice a week. You could try:

- brisk walking
- jogging or running
- swimming
- cycling
- playing tennis
- playing football.

Strengthen your muscles

Stronger muscles will help you manage your breathlessness. Try to do activities that improve your muscle strength at least twice a week. You can fit this into your daily life, for example by:

- carrying shopping bags
- doing yoga
- using weights – you could use tins of soup or bottles of water
- climbing stairs
- cycling or using an exercise bike.

Improve your balance and flexibility

Improving your balance and flexibility will help you to manage aches and pains and improve your posture. Along with strength training, it can also help to reduce the risk of falls in older people. Try to do balance and flexibility activities at least twice a week. You could try:

- tai chi
- dance
- yoga.

Classes and programmes

If you're not sure where to start with getting more active, there are lots of different activities you could try:

- Try our Singing for Lung Health classes at asthmaandlung.org.uk/motivational-mondays
- Join our Feel Good Friday Zumba sessions at asthmaandlung.org.uk/feel-good-fridays
- Ask your GP surgery for a referral to an exercise referral scheme or pulmonary rehabilitation (PR). Find out more about PR at asthmaandlung.org.uk/pulmonary-rehabilitation
- Try the NHS home workout videos at www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/home-workout-videos/
- Find out ways to move more with We Are Undefeatable at weareundefeatable.co.uk
- For more about ways to strengthen your muscles, Stronger My Way has exercises and tips from physiotherapists at www.csp.org.uk/stronger

My goals

Having a goal gives you something positive to work towards and helps you see your progress. Talk to your friends and family about them. Set yourself achievable goals to help you stay motivated.

If you're unsure about what you can achieve, speak to your healthcare professional for advice about setting activity goals.

My long-term goal

Example: Next month I want to start walking to the shops instead of getting the bus

How will I get there?

Example: I will do exercises from this handbook three times a week

When will I do this?

Example: Before work or school

Where will I do this?

Example: At home, in the living room

Who will I do this with?

Example: With my neighbour

My activity record

We hope that you find activities in this handbook that you can enjoy in your daily life. You can use this activity record to log what you do and watch your progress as you go. You can also include any other movement you do, such as walking or jogging.

And when you've completed this record, keep going! You can copy this record and use it to carry on logging your movement.

	Day of the week	Activity	Time spent	How did I feel?
Week 1	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
	Saturday			
	Sunday			
Week 2	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
	Saturday			
	Sunday			
Week 3	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
	Saturday			
	Sunday			

Continued on next page

	Day of the week	Activity	Time spent	How did I feel?
Week 4	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
	Saturday			
	Sunday			
Week 5	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
	Saturday			
	Sunday			
Week 6	Monday			
	Tuesday			
	Wednesday			
	Thursday			
	Friday			
	Saturday			
	Sunday			

Help and support

Call our helpline on **0300 222 5800**.

We are here to help if you want:

- answers to your questions – whether it's about coping with symptoms, treatment options, or finding equipment
- clear and trustworthy information about breathing problems and living with a lung condition
- to get in touch with your local support group.

Our friendly team are here Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Calls will cost the same as a local call. It's usually free, depending on your call package, even from a mobile.

Or visit **AsthmaAndLung.org.uk** to find support and information or to join our web community.

- Get support and information about living with a lung condition at **asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with**
- Find your local Breathe Easy group at **asthmaandlung.org.uk/groups-support**
- Join our web community at **healthunlocked.com/asthmalunguk-lung**

Did you find this information useful?

Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to donate today.

Each year, over two million people rely on our expert advice to make key decisions about their lung health. And today, you were one of them.

If you found this information useful and would like to help others access our expert advice, please consider making a kind gift. To donate, call **0300 222 5800**, or visit **asthmaandlung.org.uk/leaflets** or **scan the QR code**. Thank you.





Asthma + Lung UK

Helpline: **0300 222 5800**

info@asthmaandlung.org.uk

AsthmaAndLung.org.uk

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