

Functional Fitness EXERCISES

Wall Push Up: If the strain of a normal push-up is too much for you, try modifying it by using a wall. Place your palms flat on a wall with either palm directly in front of either shoulder. Stand far enough away so that your arms are completely straight while your palms are flat. Then keep your body completely straight and lower yourself towards the wall until your elbow makes a 90 degree angle; push yourself back up to standing. If this is too easy for you, perform the same movement but replace the wall with a sturdy chair.

Seated Dead Lift: Bending over can become more difficult with age, but using exercises to strengthen your back is important to keep your body in top shape. If the stress of bending forward is too difficult for you, here is a modification for a dead lift. This exercise will require a sturdy chair and some type of weight if you'd like, such as a can of food. Seated tall in your chair with your feet flat on the ground and the weight in your hand, bend over as far as you can; ideally you'd like to be able to touch your toes, but only go as far as is comfortable. Then, keep your back straight and think about using its muscles to pull yourself back up to sitting. This exercise will strengthen your low back and help rid any unwanted pain.

Seated Side Bends: While you're still sitting in that chair, go ahead and hold your weights or cans in your hands at your sides. Now, just bend to your right and try and touch your weight to the floor, or just go as far as is comfortable. Straighten back up and bend to the other side. When you're performing this motion, focus on using the muscles in the opposite side to pull your body back upright. Lastly, try to keep your back from rounding or slouching so that you are working on all of your core as well as making sure those side muscles do most of the work.

Step Ups: Your power comes from your hips, but if keeping your balance while performing a squat is questionable try this exercise instead. Use a step, stool, or chair that's at a comfortable height for you to step up onto. Stand in front of your step and bring your right leg up to stand on top of it. Once both feet are together on the step, step back down and repeat with the opposite leg. You might notice that you breathe a bit harder with this exercise than with the others; it's a good form of cardio and strengthens your legs and hips at the same time.

Wall Squats with Exercise Ball: This twist on the standard squat exercise incorporates the use of an exercise ball, which provides added support for a senior's back. Begin by placing an exercise ball against a wall and behind your back, just above the buttocks. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and slightly further out in front of you. Slowly lower yourself toward the floor, as far as your knees will allow. The exercise ball should roll down with you as you squat. After squatting as far as possible, slowly return to a standing position.

Place and Lift: This exercise helps improve your balance and ability to reach for an item on a shelf or counter. Using a hand weight or can of food, reach upward, placing the item on a shelf. Reach for the item for several seconds, emphasizing balance. Take the object and place it on a lower platform, such as a chair or stool. If possible, choose an area with a variety of high and low placements in order to practice maintaining balance. Perform this exercise for a total of three minutes

Stair Climb and Bicep Curl: This exercise helps strengthen the quadriceps muscles on the front of the thighs, as well as the bicep muscles, which can boost your strength for carrying groceries and other items. Consult your physical therapist if you have balance concerns to ensure you can safely perform this exercise. Begin at the bottom of a flight of stairs while holding light dumbbells, such as three-pound weights. (If you are a beginner, you may wish to leave out the weights at first.) As you slowly climb the first step, lift one weight toward your chest with your palm facing your body. When you climb the next step, lower that weight to the starting position. Climb the next step, lifting the other arm for your bicep curl.



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