Royal Osteoporosis Society
Better bone health for everybody

Before and after exercise
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Getting started with exercise: preparation, warm up and cool down

Exercise and keeping moving is great for bone health and osteoporosis - whatever your age or wellness and whether you have broken bones in the past or not. Being physically active and exercising will help you in so many ways and is very unlikely to cause a broken bone. Remember, if you're just starting out, even small amounts is better than nothing – set achievable goals and take it step by step.

Don't worry too much about the word 'exercise'. You might be someone who doesn't like the idea of exercise - or your general health may limit you in what you feel you can do. We use the word 'exercise' quite a lot but think about 'being more active' or 'keeping moving', whatever works best for you. There is something for everyone in our resources, including for those who aren't very mobile or have many fractures because of osteoporosis.

Before you start exercising read this guide to help you plan and get the most out of your exercise sessions.

Getting started

- Begin with activities you know you can do comfortably. Gradually, over time, increase the amount and intensity to reach your target
- You'll find that 'little and often' is needed to begin with
- A little muscle stiffness for a day or two after exercise indicates that you have done more than usual; this will stimulate improvements. However, persistent pain may be a sign of injury and if it persists for longer than a few days you should arrange to see your doctor
- Plan before undertaking activities that may increase the chance of you falling over. You will need to improve your muscle strength and balance before you start brisk walking for example!
- Everyone with or at risk of osteoporosis doesn't need to see a physiotherapist but if you have any other medical conditions that may affect your ability to exercise, talk to your doctor or practice nurse before you start something too challenging – they may recommend you see a physiotherapist for advice
- If you have spinal fractures that are painful, consider asking your doctor for a referral to a physiotherapist for advice
- If you are having a bad day in terms of pain either because of fractures or something else, just do some very gentle exercise. At a minimum, avoid long periods of sitting by standing up for a minute or so every hour because being on your feet is good for bone
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes or trainers, make sure you are warm and you have plenty of space to move
- You might like to do some exercises at home or join a class, or you may prefer to continue a leisure or sports activity. Find something you enjoy and make it work for you
- Exercise regularly to get maximum benefit

Warm up before starting your exercises to get your joints and muscles ready. Warm muscles are less stiff and work more efficiently, so you'll prevent injury during your exercise routine.

Stretching after exercise will help to increase your flexibility and can help to reduce injury. Taking time to cool down at the end of your routine will help to return your breathing and heart rate back to resting levels.

0808 800 0035 - Specialist nurse Helpline
nurses@theros.org.uk
@RoyalOsteoSoc

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Warm up exercises

Here is a warm up routine for you to follow before using our exercise fact sheets.

In a warm up you should feel yourself getting warmer but you shouldn't be out of breath. It allows the circulation of blood to increase and gives you a chance to prepare your body with some mobility exercises, to lubricate joints.

What you need: All movements can be performed standing or sitting. If you struggle with balance or want to perform any of these exercises seated, you'll need an armless chair.

1

Walk on the spot

- Move your arms in rhythm with your steps
- Keep your elbows bent
- Continue for one minute

2

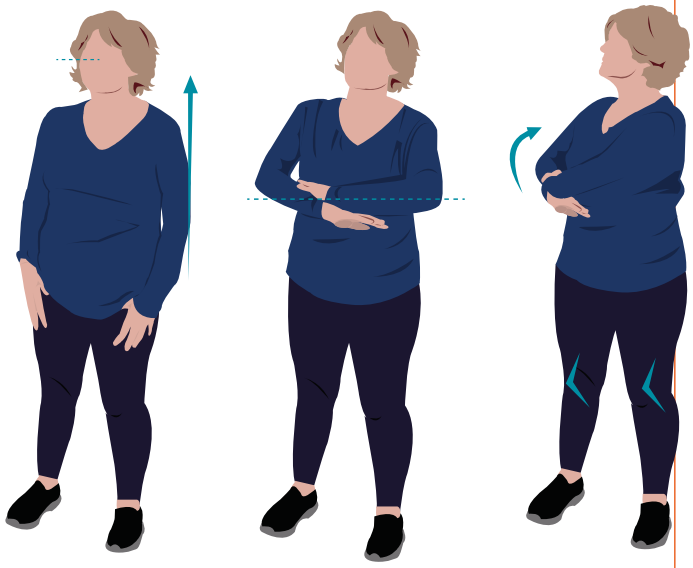
March on the spot

- Move your arms up and down in rhythm with your steps, increasing the height of your knee lift from a walk
- Keep your elbows bent
- Continue for two minutes

3

Trunk twist

- Place feet shoulder width apart, keep your back tall, tummy muscles pulled in and bend your knees slightly
- Raise your arms between chest and shoulder height with your elbows bent, resting your hand on top of the other
- Gently rotate your shoulders and torso to the right (as far as you can comfortably go), letting your head move with your spine, keeping your hips facing forward
- Return to the centre and repeat to the left
- Repeat 5 times on each side



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Warm up exercises

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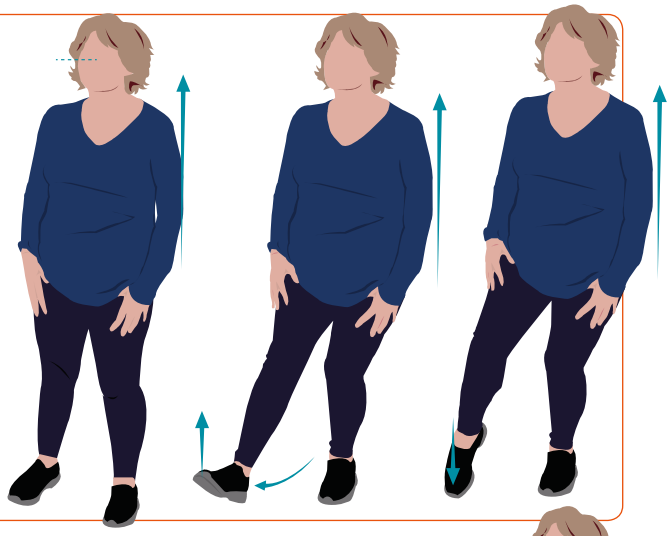
Ankle mobility

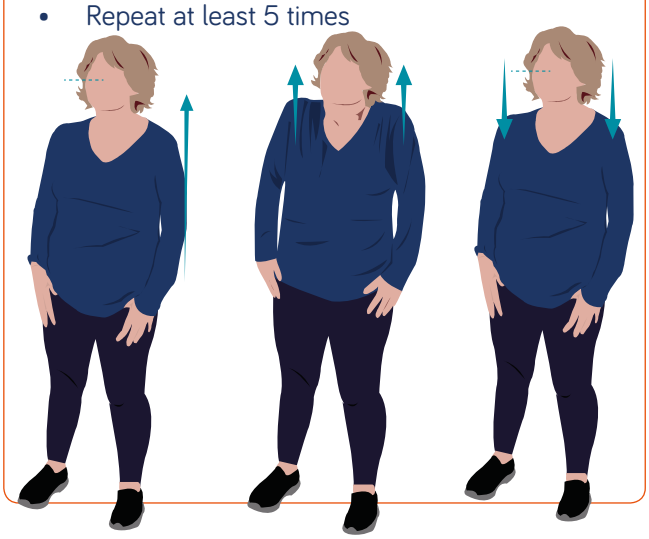
- Place feet shoulder width apart, lengthen your spine and keep your back tall
- Place one heel out on the floor slightly in front of you with your toes pointing up
- Lift your knee then move the foot slowly so the toe touches the same spot on the floor and the heel points up
- Repeat 8 times on each foot
- Tip: Aim for as much movement at your ankles as you can



5

Shoulder circles

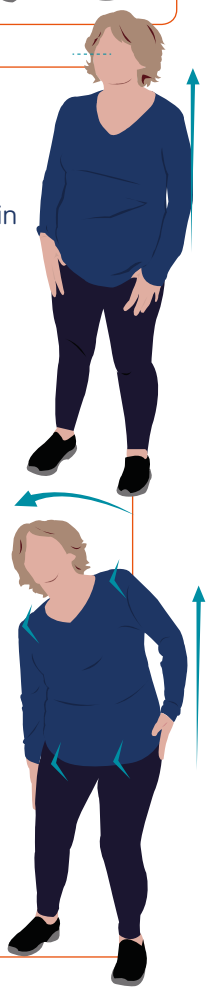
- Place feet shoulder width apart, keep your back tall, tummy muscles pulled in and bend your knees slightly
- Raise both your shoulders up toward your ears, opening them out towards your back and lowering deep into your spine, returning to neutral position
- Repeat at least 5 times



6

Side bends

- Place feet shoulder width apart, keep your back tall, tummy muscles pulled in and bend your knees slightly
- Keep your hands down by your sides
- Keep your tummy muscles pulled in and slowly bend at your waist, leaning over to your right, keeping your back straight
- Look forwards being careful not to let your ear drop to your shoulder and keep your hips and shoulders facing forwards
- Hold for a few seconds then return to the centre and then lean to your left
- Repeat 5 times on each side
- Tip: Imagine you are between two panes of glass and have to stay in line as you lean sideways



You should be feeling your heart rate elevated and your body heating up; that's going to help you prevent injuries. So now you can move on to your exercises, but remember to come back for your cool down stretches!
See the accompanying video to these exercises at theros.org.uk/exercise/WarmUp

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Cool down stretches

Here is a cool down routine for you to follow after using our exercise fact sheets.

In a cool down you should feel your breathing and heart rate return to normal levels.

1

Hamstring stretch

- Place feet hip width apart, keep your back tall, tummy muscles pulled in
- Place your right leg out in front of you, heel down on the floor, with your toes relaxed
- Bend your left knee slightly with your foot flat on the floor, look forward and rest both palms on top of your left thigh
- Lean forward from your hips until you feel a stretch in the back of your right leg
- Keep your shoulders down and relaxed taking care not to round your lower back
- Hold for around 20 seconds, push up with your hands keeping your back straight and bring your feet back together
- Repeat on your other leg

2

Calf stretch

- **Standing:** Place feet hip width apart, keep your back tall, tummy muscles pulled in
- Step your right foot backward, both feet foot flat on the floor and facing forward
- Keep your hips and shoulders facing toward the front and lean gently forward from your hips, bending your front knee so that it is directly over your ankle
- Rest both palms on top of your left thigh, pushing your right heel down into the floor until you feel a stretch in the calf of your straight leg
- Hold for around 20 seconds, and bring your feet back together
- Repeat on your other leg
- **Seated:** To modify this move, sit towards the front of your chair, knees bent over your ankles, hip width apart
- Straighten one leg by sliding one foot forward, resting your heel on the floor
- Pull your toes up toward your knee
- Hold for around 20 seconds then repeat on your other leg

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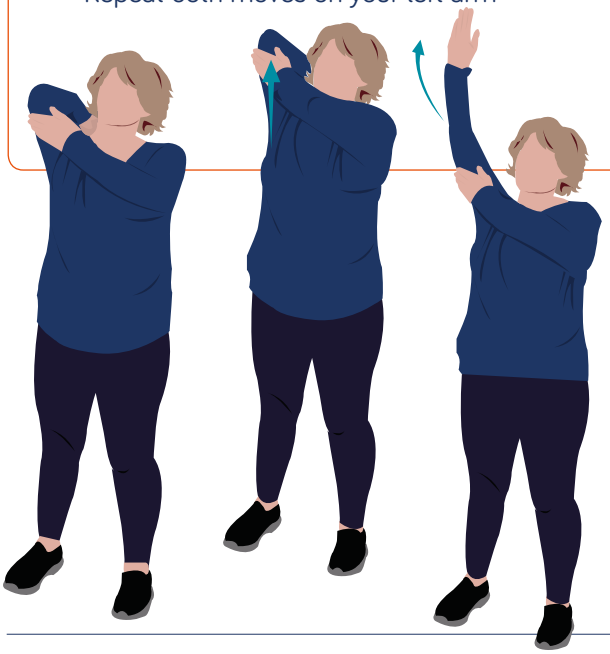
Cool down stretches

3

Triceps and side stretch

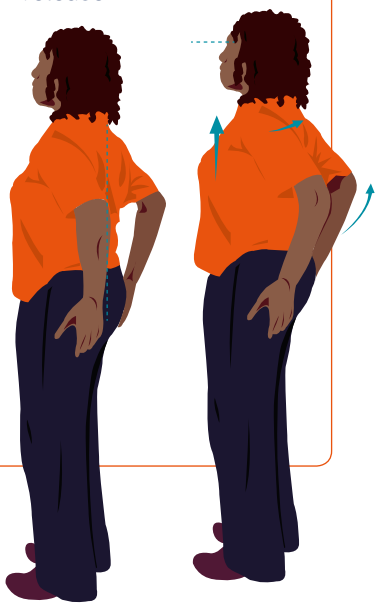
- Place feet shoulder width apart, keep your back tall, and bend your knees slightly
- Place your right hand onto your right shoulder and support your elbow with the other hand if needed
- Walk your fingertips down the back of your shoulder, pushing it gently if comfortable
- Aim for the fingertips of your right arm to reach down between your shoulder blades or until you feel a stretch in the back of your arm
- Hold for around 20 seconds and release gently
- From that position gently extend your right arm up toward the ceiling
- Keep your tummy muscles pulled in and slowly bend at your waist, leaning over to your left, until you feel a stretch in your right side
- Look forwards being careful not to let your ear drop to your shoulder and keep your hips and shoulders facing forwards
- Hold for around 20 seconds, release gently and then return to the centre
- Repeat both moves on your left arm



4

Chest stretch

- Place feet shoulder width apart, lengthen your spine and place your hands on your bottom
- Look forward, lift your chest up and gently squeeze your arms back, pulling your shoulder blades together
- Hold for around 20 seconds and gently release



Tip: You can choose the length of time you warm up and cool down for. If you feel you need to get a bit warmer or loosen or stretch joints more, you could carry out each exercise for longer. Over time, as you become more used to exercising, you may find you'll shorten your warm up and cool down routine. See the accompanying video to these exercises at theros.org.uk/exercise/CoolDown

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