

# EXERCISES

## at the kitchen sink



The exercises in the booklet consist of 7 activities from the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living program from the province of British Columbia. It is our hope that by following the suggestions in the booklet and doing the exercises you will improve your muscle strength, balance and endurance and reduce your risk of falling.

**Not all exercise programs are suitable for everyone.** Although you may be able to do these exercises easily, it is recommended you speak with your health care provider about the kind of exercises and activities you can safely do.

**You are never too old or young to start!**



# Getting Active

Being active and doing exercises can reduce your risk of falling and help prevent injury from a fall. Find an activity that you enjoy, and do it.

## Exercises at the Kitchen Sink:

- Improve your balance
- Increase your strength, endurance, and flexibility
- Help you sleep better
- Improve your mood
- Can be done in your home...and are free!

People who do these exercises routinely report being stronger and looking and feeling better. Regular physical activity can help prevent diseases such as diabetes, dementia and some types of cancer.



# The Buddy System

It is sometimes hard to do regular physical activity on your own. Invite a friend to join you – have fun and socialize at the same time.

## Remember, every little bit helps...

- Plan some time each day to exercise
- Exercise with someone else
- Exercise at the same time each day - try it after breakfast or lunch
- Write down the number of exercises you do each day

### **Before you start your exercises be sure to check the following:**

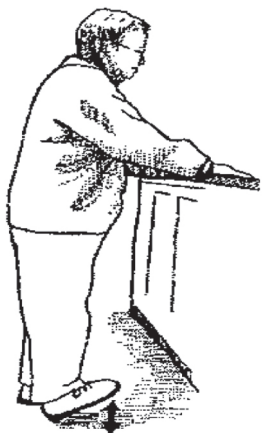
- Do you feel OK?
- Have you eaten?
- Are you wearing shoes that have a non-slip bottom?
- Is there any clutter, or things you could trip over around you?



## Do exercises you feel comfortable doing

- Start slowly and if necessary do just one of the exercises each day. Increase the exercises as you are able. Try a few every morning, afternoon and evening rather than trying to do them all at once.
- If any activity causes you increased pain or shortness of breath, do fewer or stop that activity and talk with your doctor.
- The exercises in this booklet are done while supporting yourself by holding onto a stable surface, such as a kitchen sink. Over time, as you get stronger, gradually decrease the amount of support you use through your hands, working towards not needing to hold on at all.
- Keep track of how many of each exercise you do. This will help you see your progress.

**Now let's begin!**



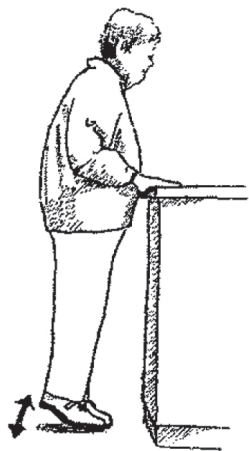
## **EXERCISE 1**

# **Slow Toe Taps**

1. Stand facing the kitchen sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Starting with the right foot keep the heel on the floor and lift your toes up.
3. Count 1, 2, 3 while you lift your toes and then lower them and relax.
4. Repeat with the left foot. Lift, 1, 2, 3 lower, relax.
5. Continue to do this 3 to 5 times with each foot.  
Do them slowly.
6. Gradually add one or more repetitions every few days until you can do this 15 times with each foot.

### **ACTIVITY CHECKLIST**

- ☐ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ☐ Are you ready to continue?



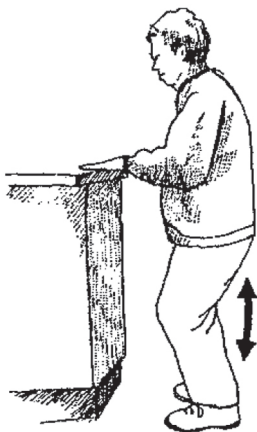
## EXERCISE 2

# Up on Toes

1. Stand facing the kitchen sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Raise up onto the toes of both feet. Come down slowly.
3. Again, up on toes, down slowly.
4. Continue doing this 3 to 5 more times if you can.
5. Gradually add one more repetition every few days or once a week until you can do this 15 times.

### ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ☐ Should you stop, or are you okay to continue?
- ☐ As you are able, try to decrease the amount of support through your hands as your strength and balance improve.

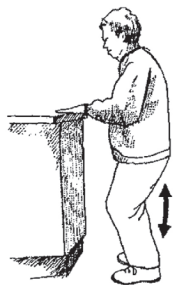


## EXERCISE 3

# Mini Squats

1. Stand facing the sink with your feet comfortably apart.
2. Hold on with both hands.
3. Bend your knees slightly keeping your back straight.  
Keep your heels on the floor.
4. Hold for a few seconds if you are able. Now straighten your knees.
5. Bend your knees slightly again, hold...then straighten.  
Do this 3 to 5 times.
6. Add one more squat every few days as you are able until you can do 15.

**Remember don't bend too far – do a small squat only.**



## EXERCISE 3

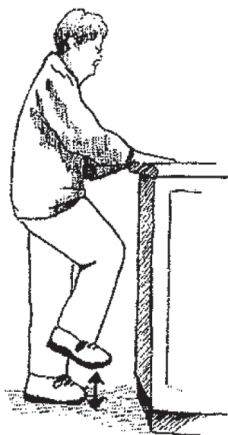
# Mini Squats

### ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Were you comfortable doing this exercise?  
If so, please continue.
- ☐ Check your posture:
  - Stand tall and strong
  - Toes pointing forward, not turned in or out
  - Are your shoulders back and is your chin tucked in

It is okay to give yourself permission to quit if you have had enough for today.





## EXERCISE 4

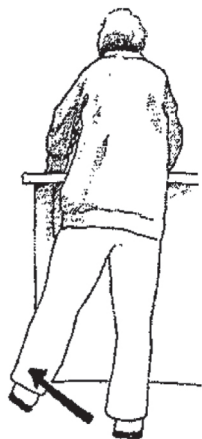
# Walking on the Spot

1. Stand facing the kitchen sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Walk or march slowly on the spot. Count to 30.
3. Bring your knees up and slowly lower your foot back to the floor.  
Great work!
4. Every third or fourth day gradually increase the time spent walking by one minute.

When you are strong enough, you may want to begin walking around your home for a few minutes without stopping. When you do this, use the mobility aide that you normally use for walking.

### ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ☐ Are you standing tall and strong?
- ☐ Are you ready to continue?



## **EXERCISE 5**

# **Alternate Leg Out and In**

1. Stand facing the sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Keeping your toes pointing forward, lift your left leg out to the side.
3. Hold this position for a few seconds if you can, then slowly lower leg back to the centre.
4. Now lift your right leg out to the side. Hold and lower back to the centre.
5. Keep alternating legs, left...then right...Repeat 3 to 5 times.
6. Keep strong and tall. Do not let your upper body sway.
7. Do one more set - including both left and right legs each week until eventually you can do 15 sets.



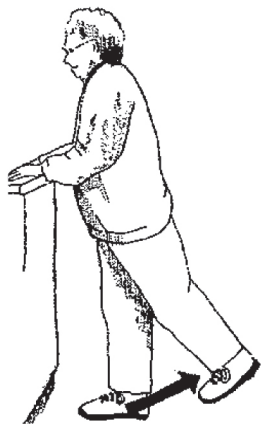
## EXERCISE 5

# Alternate Leg Out and In

### ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ☐ Remember, as your strength and balance improves try to decrease the amount of support through your hands.
  - Try holding on with one hand, and a few fingers of the other hand
  - When you get comfortable with that, hold on with a few fingers of each hand
  - Now try to rest one finger of each hand on the counter
  - Then try one finger of one hand
  - When you are strong enough, try no hands
  - You may not be able to do this in the beginning, but as you get stronger you will rely less on the support of your hands

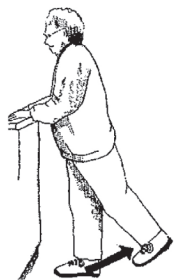
**Are you ready to continue?**



## EXERCISE 6

# Alternate Leg Behind

1. Stand tall and strong facing the sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Extend your left leg behind you without bending your knee.
3. Return your leg to the starting position.
4. Next extend your right leg behind you, then return.
5. Check that you are keeping your back straight and not leaning too far forward.
6. Continue alternating each leg, repeating 3 to 5 times.
7. Increase the amount you do every few days until you can do 15 sets.

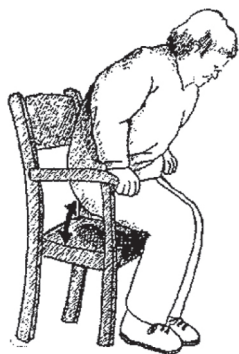


## EXERCISE 6

# Alternate Leg Behind

### ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ☐ Are you ready to continue?
- ☐ Before you continue, take a minute and check your posture:
  - Stand tall and strong
  - Feet on the floor with toes pointing forward
  - Keep your head up looking forward
- ☐ Rest if you need to.



## EXERCISE 7

# Sit to Stand

It is important **not** to rush through this exercise.

1. Sit in a firm chair with the back of the chair against the wall if possible. If you have a walker place it in front of you - lock the brakes.
2. Bring your bottom a little closer to the front of the chair if needed.
3. Place your feet flat on the floor, close to the chair. Put your hands on the armrests.
4. Lean forward and stand up.
5. Stand tall for a few seconds, holding onto your walker if you need it for support.
6. Step back until you feel the chair against the back of your legs, reach back to hold the armrests, and slowly lower yourself to sit down in the chair.
7. When you are ready again, stand tall for a few seconds, then sit down. Do this 3 to 5 more times.
8. Do one more sit to stand every few days as you are able until you can do 15.



## EXERCISE 7

# Sit to Stand

### ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ How are you feeling after completing all of the exercises you have selected to do at this time?
- ☐ Remember:
  - Mark your calendar as an exercise day
  - As you feel stronger, try to use less support through your hands

**Give yourself a pat on the back for  
a job well done!**

**You are taking charge of your health.**

Continue reading through this booklet to learn other things  
that can help keep you safe and independent!



# Most falls are predictable and preventable.

You may be able to prevent a fall by making a few simple changes in and around your home.



**Take a look around...**  
**Do you need to make changes?**

For more ideas on how to prevent a fall, try the suggestions in this booklet and speak with your doctor or health care provider, or contact your local public health unit.

# Health Management

See your doctor at least once a year for a check up. Let your doctor know if you have had a fall.

## Medications

- Review all medications at least once a year with your pharmacist or health care provider (include herbal, vitamins and over the counter medicines)
- Keep an up to date list of all medications with you
- Ask about the side effects of the medication you take, such as dizziness or loss of balance
- Use only one pharmacy so your pharmacist knows all your medications
- Do not take old medications and never take another person's medications
- Return no longer used medication to any pharmacy for safe disposal
- Ask for help if you are having difficult managing your medications
- Be aware, alcohol can change the way medications work in your body; even without the effect of medication, alcohol can increase your risk of having a fall

### **Don't forget to check your:**

- ☐ Vision      ☐ Hearing      ☐ Teeth/dentures

# Food & Nutrition

Healthy eating looks different for everyone.

Canada's Food Guide is an example of how one may eat.

Make water your  
drink of choice



Have plenty of  
vegetables  
and fruits



Eat protein  
foods

Choose  
whole  
grain foods

## ***BE MINDFUL OF YOUR EATING HABITS***

- Take time to eat
- Notice when you are hungry and when you are full

## ***COOK MORE OFTEN***

- Plan what you eat
- Involve others in planning and preparing meals

## ***ENJOY YOUR FOOD***

- Culture and food traditions are a part of healthy eating

## ***EAT MEALS WITH OTHERS***

- Make it a habit to eat a variety of nutritious foods each day
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit, whole grain foods and protein foods

Note: The food guide assumes one has access to adequate income, housing, social supports, transportation, time, and food literacy.

Source: Health Canada, 2019

### ***CHOOSE PROTEIN FOODS THAT COME FROM PLANTS MORE OFTEN***

- Choose foods with unsaturated fats instead of saturated fats

### ***LIMIT HIGHLY PROCESSED FOODS***

- If you choose these foods, eat them less often and in small amounts
- Prepare meals and snacks using ingredients that have little to no added sodium, sugars or saturated fat
- Choose more nutritious menu options when eating out

### ***USE FOOD LABELS***

### ***BE AWARE THAT FOOD MARKETING CAN INFLUENCE YOUR CHOICES***

For information about Meals on Wheels or similar meal programs contact your local health unit. In Chatham-Kent you can also find information at [www.letstalkfood-ck.com](http://www.letstalkfood-ck.com)

### ***Still have questions?***

Connect with a Registered Dietitian for free, by calling **Health Connect Ontario** Dial 811 OR Toll free TTY line: 1-866-797-0007 OR visit <https://healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca/static/guest/home>

For more information, tips, recipes, and resources visit <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/> OR <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/tips-for-healthy-eating/seniors/>

Source: Health Canada, 2019

# Nutrition Tips

- If you have a small appetite, try eating nutritious snacks every 2 to 3 hours
  - Some nutritious snacks include fruit and yogurt, a hardboiled egg, vegetables and hummus, apple sauce, walnuts, whole grain toast with peanut or almond butter, cheese, whole grain crackers
  - Take smaller bites and chew your food well
  - Add flavour to your food using herbs and spices instead of salt
  - When cooking, make extra food so you have leftovers
  - When you can, eat meals with family or friends
- If you cough or choke when eating or drinking, you may have a swallowing problem. Speak to your health care provider
  - If your teeth or gums are sore, or if your dentures do not fit well, it may be harder for you to chew and eat. Talk to your dentist

# Are you Eating Alone?

When you eat alone, it can sometimes be hard to stay motivated about cooking meals.

- Collect simple recipes that use only a few ingredients and are fast to make
- Prepare foods when you have the most energy
- Cook larger meals ahead of time and freeze leftovers for another day
- Find more nutritious frozen, ready-to-eat dinners; look for dinners with lower sodium and fat and at least 10 or more grams of protein
- Use bagged salads or pre-chopped vegetables
- If you have trouble using kitchen utensils ask your doctor about a referral to an Occupational Therapist



Consider taking Meals on Wheels or a similar service a few times a week or more.

Contact your local senior centre - many serve weekly meals.

Connect with friends and share meal prep and eating time together!

# Eating on a budget

Best buy for each food group:

## VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

- Frozen or **canned vegetables and fruit** – low sodium or no added salt varieties, fruit canned in juices
- Fresh vegetables and fruit in season

## PROTEIN FOODS

- Less expensive cuts of meat, such as stewing, blade, pork shoulder or canned fish
- Tofu, dried or canned beans, peas, and lentils
- Eggs
- Powdered milk, store-bought cheese, and yogurt

## WHOLE GRAIN FOODS

- Dry pasta, brown rice
- Hot cereals like oatmeal, cornmeal, or cream of wheat



Looking for more tips? Check out:  
<https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Budget/10-Tips-for-Planning-Meals-on-a-Budget.aspx>  
AND  
<https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Budget/20-Ways-to-Save-Money-on-Your-Groceries.aspx>

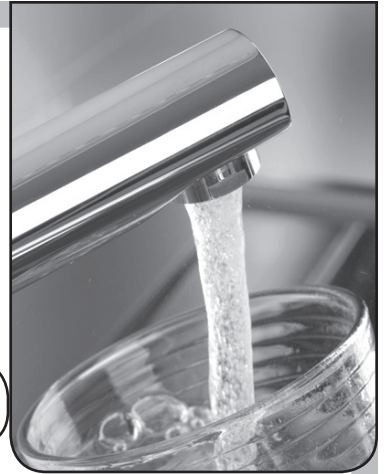


# Drink up!

At every age, it's important to drink enough fluid because it helps prevent dehydration, joint and muscle pain, and constipation.

As we get older it gets harder to recognize when you're thirsty. Try keeping a water bottle with you wherever you go, and take sips throughout the day.

**Don't wait until you feel thirsty to have a drink of water!**



Water is best, but other drinks and foods can also help you meet your fluid needs. These include: milk or fortified soy beverage, 100% fruit or vegetable juices, low sodium soups, herbal teas, and vegetables and fruits. Limit sugary drinks such as juices, pop, iced tea, lemonade, and sweetened coffees and teas. Keep caffeinated beverages to 3 cups or less per day. Remember, drinking alcohol could put you at risk of having a fall.



Refill your water bottle for free when you're out and about in the community! Check out [BlueW.org](http://BlueW.org), a web-based tool designed to help you and your family find free water fountains throughout Chatham-Kent.

# Calcium

Calcium is important for bone health. Some calcium-rich foods include milk, some fortified plantbased beverages (soy, almond, rice, etc.), yogurt, cheese, fortified 100% orange juice, almonds, and white beans. For more examples of calcium-rich foods see <https://osteoporosis.ca/calcium-rich-foods/>. If you do not eat many of these foods each day, speak with your healthcare provider as you may need to take a calcium supplement.

# Vitamin D

We need calcium to keep our bones strong, but it is also important to get enough vitamin D to help our bodies absorb the calcium. We can make vitamin D from sunlight, but this gets harder as we age.

- Older adults spend less time in the sunlight
- Some medications block vitamin D (Dilantin, prednisone, some laxatives)

Foods that have vitamin D include milk, some fortified soy beverages (check the label), fortified 100% orange juice, salmon, sardines, trout and herring. For more examples of foods with Vitamin D see <https://osteoporosis.ca/vitamin-d/>. It's difficult to get enough vitamin D, so it is recommended that all adults over the age of 50 take a vitamin D supplement.

**Many supplements have both vitamin D and calcium.**

**Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find a supplement that is right for you.**

# Don't forget your fibre!

We all know that fibre is good for us, but why?

## **Getting enough fibre:**

- Keeps you regular and prevents constipation
- Improves blood sugar levels in people with diabetes
- Keeps you feeling full for longer
- Can lower levels of cholesterol and fat in your blood
- Lowers your risk of colon cancer, heart disease, and digestive problems

## **Get more fibre everyday.**

- Start your day with high-fibre cereal (oatmeal, bran cereal)
- Have a fruit or vegetable with every meal and as a snack
- Eat the skins on your fruits and vegetables.
- Choose whole grain or whole wheat bread, pasta, and rice
- Add chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, and other beans to your soup, pasta, and salad
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about taking a fibre supplement (Metamucil®, Benefibre®)
- **Make sure to drink plenty of water**

**NOTE: If you use laxatives regularly, talk to your doctor.**

# Ease the Strain

There are many safety devices available to ease the strains of daily activities. They include equipment, mobility aids, practical daily aids and gadgets to suit all needs. Canes, grab bars, raised toilet seats, and bath seats are just a few.

Speak with your doctor or a health care provider to see what may be available to help you remain independent and confident. An occupational therapist or physiotherapist can help explain what safety devices can best meet your needs.



# Clothing and Footwear

- Wear clothes that fit loosely, are easy to get on and take off, and have simple closures
- Nightgowns, housecoats, and pants that once fit may now hang down on the floor and cause you to trip
- Wear a shoe that fits well with a closed heel and a thin, non slip sole with good tread



# Make your home a safer place.

Most falls occur at home. Some simple changes can make your home safer for you.

✓ In your home...		✓ When you go out...	
	Place a night-light in the hallway and bathroom		Leave a light on by your door or steps
	Leave space around your furniture. Be clutter-free		Don't be in a rush...take the time you need
	Remove loose or scattered rugs or if not possible securely tape down		Keep steps and walkways in good condition
	Get a portable phone and keep it within reach. Don't rush to answer it - they will call back		Shovel or apply salt, sand or grit to melt snow and ice on steps and walkways
	Keep the things you often use on easy to reach shelves		Paint the edge of all steps a contrasting colour (indoor and outdoor)
	Coil or tape cords next to the wall and out of the way		Watch for and report cracked or uneven walkways

# Plan Ahead

**This may be helpful in the event that you do fall.**

As much as we try to prevent it, 1 in 3 seniors fall each year. Regular physical activity helps prevent falls and helps prevent injuries from falls. However, a fall may happen.

Consider the following to help you be prepared if you do fall.

- Use a personal alarm system
- Keep a portable phone or cell phone with you at all times
- Set up speed dial numbers on your phone
- Find a daily telephone buddy to connect with each day
- Carry a whistle
- Leave a spare key with someone you trust who can get to you quickly
- Learn how to get up off the floor if you fall and are not injured; practice this when someone else is with you



# Practice Makes Perfect

## **If you fall and can get up:**

- Ease yourself up onto your elbows
- Move onto your hands and knees
- Hold onto a firm surface such as a chair or toilet to support yourself
- Face the surface and ease yourself to a standing position
- Turn yourself gently and sit on a firm surface



## **What if you can't get up?**

### ***Get someone's attention:***

- Shout or bang something against the wall
- Press your personal alarm button if you have one
- Use the telephone if you can

### ***Get comfortable:***

- Find a near by pillow or cushion or roll up an item of clothing to put under your head
- Keep warm by covering yourself up with anything you can safely reach
- Roll away from a damp area if your bladder "lets go"
- Prevent stiffness and help your circulation by moving your position as you are able

# Congratulations!

By continuing to do **Exercises at the Kitchen Sink** and following the suggestions in this booklet you have taken your first steps toward healthy, safe, and independent living!



Record the number of times each activity is done.

MONTH:	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1. Slow Toe Taps							
2. Up on Toes							
3. Mini Squats							
4. Walking on the Spot							
5. Alternate Leg Out/In							
6. Alternate Leg Behind							
7. Sit to Stand							

MONTH:	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1. Slow Toe Taps							
2. Up on Toes							
3. Mini Squats							
4. Walking on the Spot							
5. Alternate Leg Out/In							
6. Alternate Leg Behind							
7. Sit to Stand							

Record the number of times each activity is done.

MONTH:	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1. Slow Toe Taps							
2. Up on Toes							
3. Mini Squats							
4. Walking on the Spot							
5. Alternate Leg Out/In							
6. Alternate Leg Behind							
7. Sit to Stand							

MONTH:	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1. Slow Toe Taps							
2. Up on Toes							
3. Mini Squats							
4. Walking on the Spot							
5. Alternate Leg Out/In							
6. Alternate Leg Behind							
7. Sit to Stand							



CK Public Health:  
519.352.7270  
[www.ckphu.com](http://www.ckphu.com)

Revised: July 2023