

Chair Exercises for Seniors

The complete 25-move seated routine - large-print guide

Safety first: sturdy armless chair on a non-slip surface, feet flat, breathe normally, and stop any move that causes pain. Go at the pace of the slowest participant.

Warm-up (3 minutes)

1. Seated march

lift alternating knees, gentle pace, 30-60 seconds.

2. Shoulder rolls

8 rolls backward, 8 forward.

3. Neck turns

slowly look left, center, right; 5 each side. No circles.

4. Ankle circles

8 circles each direction, one foot at a time.

5. Big reach

inhale, reach both arms overhead; exhale, float them down. 5 times.

Upper-body chair exercises

6. Arm raises

lift both arms to shoulder height, hold 2 seconds, lower. 10 reps.

7. Bicep curls

with light dumbbells, water bottles, or soup cans. 10 reps.

8. Overhead press

press hands toward the ceiling, elbows soft. 8-10 reps.

9. Chest squeeze

press palms together at chest height, hold 5 seconds. 8 reps.

10. Wall-less push-up

hands on armrests, press down to lift weight slightly. 5-8 reps for stronger residents.

11. Wrist curls & finger spreads

wonderful for arthritis; 10 slow reps each.

Core & posture exercises

12. Seated twist

hands across chest, rotate gently left and right. 8 each side.

13. Side bends

reach one hand toward the floor, sliding along the chair leg. 6 each side.

14. Tummy tighteners

draw the belly button in, hold 5 seconds, release. 8 reps.

15. Seated good morning

hinge forward slightly with a flat back, return tall. 8 reps.

16. Knee lifts with hold

lift one knee, hold 3 seconds, lower with control. 6 each leg.

Leg & circulation exercises

17. Leg extensions

straighten one knee, hold 2 seconds, lower. 8 each leg.

18. Heel raises

lift heels, press through the balls of the feet. 12 reps.

19. Toe taps

heels planted, lift toes. 12 reps. Alternate with heel raises for a "pump" that boosts circulation.

20. Seated kicks

gentle alternating kicks, like a slow can-can. 20 seconds.

21. Sit-to-stand

the most functional exercise there is: stand from the chair (armrests allowed), sit back down with control. 5-8 reps for able residents.

Chair yoga & cool-down stretches

22. Seated cat-cow

round the back on the exhale, lift the chest on the inhale. 6 slow cycles.

23. Overhead side stretch

one arm overhead, lean gently. Hold 15 seconds each side.

24. Hamstring stretch

extend one leg, heel on floor, hinge forward slightly. 15 seconds each.

25. Calming breath

inhale 4 counts, exhale 6 counts, eyes closed if comfortable. 5 cycles to finish.

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