

MS & EXERCISE





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Top tips for staying active

1. Don't overdo it. Listen to your body when it tells you to stop.

2. Everyone can feel lethargic in hot or humid weather, but with MS the effect is often pronounced. Try using a fan or a cold-water spray when exercising or have a cool bath before you start.

3. Remember to breathe! It might sound obvious, but you'd be surprised by the number of people who hold their breath when they exercise.

4. Have a trigger to remind you to exercise. Maybe when the adverts or weather come on the television, or when waiting for the kettle to boil.

5. Choose an exercise that works for you. Everyone is different, and some people like to exercise in a group setting - in a class or as part of a team. Others like to work individually whether that is at the gym, swimming pool or at home.

Moderate exercise has been shown to improve strength, mobility and bowel and bladder function for individuals with mild to moderate MS. Exercise is also helpful in helping maintain a healthy weight. This reduces your chances of acquiring comorbidities and can also reduce the impact of some MS symptoms, such as pain and fatigue.

Exercising is good for the mind and brain, not just the body. In general, exercise has been found to be neuroprotective, to improve symptoms of depression, improve cognitive processing speed, visuospatial memory, executive function and cognitive flexibility. These boosts can last for several days after exercising.

A selection of exercises that might aid in addressing issues such as balance, posture and strength.



Balance exercises

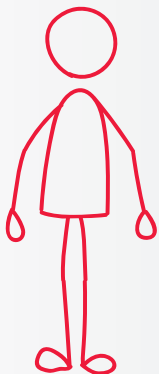


Exercise 1

Feet together balance

STARTING POSITION

Stand with your feet as close together as you can. You may want to steady yourself at the kitchen sink or hold the back of a sturdy chair.



Step one

When you are steady, let go of your support and hold your balance. Count how many seconds, aiming for 20 if you can.

Step two

If you can do it, try with both eyes closed. But be very careful.

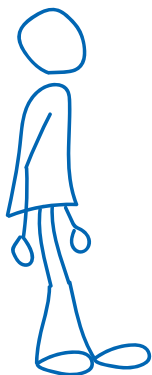
You may not quite reach the suggested number but you can work towards increasing the length of time you can balance.

Exercise 2

Heel to toe balance

STARTING POSITION

Place one foot in front of the other, heel to toe.
You may want to use support.



Step one

When you are steady, let go of your support and hold your balance. Try to count to 10. Change so that the other foot is in front and repeat.

Step two

If you feel very confident, try with both eyes shut. Be careful this one is tricky.

You may not reach the suggested number but you can work towards increasing the length of time you can balance.

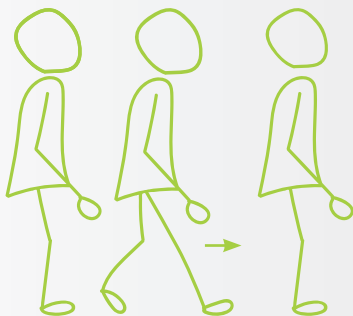
This exercise gives practice on how to save yourself if you do lose balance, for instance if someone bumps into you by accident.

Exercise 3

Stepping balance

STARTING POSITION

Standing with your feet slightly apart.



Step one

Step one foot forward as if crossing a ditch, then step back to where you started, without holding on. Repeat, leading with the other leg. Repeat 3 - 5 times each leg.

Step two

Try the same exercise but step backwards instead and then bring your foot back to where you started. As you improve you may be able to make the steps longer.

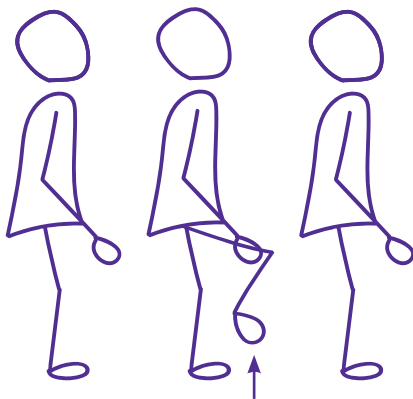
This exercise gives practice in how to save yourself if you lose balance, for instance if someone bumps into you.

Exercise 4

Single leg balance

STARTING POSITION

Standing with your feet slightly apart



Step one

Try lifting leg off the floor and hold your balance. Lower, then try with the other leg. Count, aiming for 15 if you can.

Step two

If you are very brave try this with your eyes closed but be careful and always make sure there is something to catch hold of.

Posture exercises

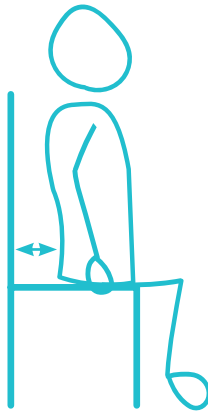


Exercise 1

Pelvic tilt sitting

STARTING POSITION

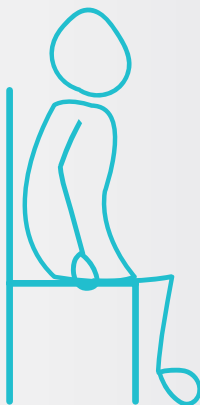
Sitting on a firm surface edge of the bed, on a stool/chair or even the loo!



Step one

Sit upright with shoulders relaxed, head level and eyes looking straight ahead. If you are on a chair you need to be sitting clear of the back

NB: This is a very important exercise as it corrects posture and allows fluidity of movement in the trunk which is so often lost when changes of posture occur. It will also encourage deeper breathing and therefore better lung expansion. This is a good exercise for everyone because it realigns the body to give it its best potential for movement.



Step two

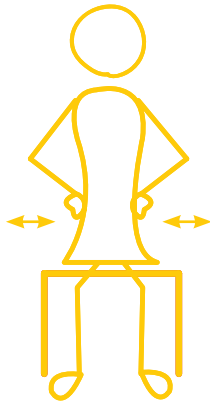
Drop the trunk down from a point on the breastbone whilst letting the pelvis tip down and back as if you are slumping. Then sit up straight tilting the pelvis slightly forward and bringing the breastbone up and forward, making you stretch your back upright. Your head should remain level with your eyes focused ahead. You should feel that your weight comes forward over the hips. Repeat 3 - 5 times.

Exercise 2

Breath out

STARTING POSITION

Sitting on a firm surface e.g. edge of the bed, on a stool/chair or even the loo!



Step one

Place your hands low down on the rib cage. Take a deep breath, feel as if you are filling the space under your hands with air, then breath out.

Step two

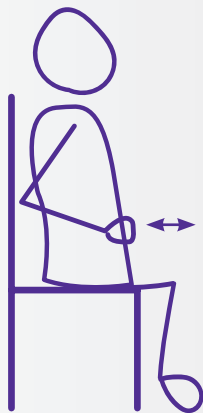
Only repeat this 2 - 3 times as it may make you feel dizzy if you do more

Exercise 3

Breath in

STARTING POSITION

Sitting on a firm surface e.g. edge of the bed, on a stool/chair or even the loo!



Step one

Place one hand centrally over your tummy just below the ribcage. Breath in and try fill up with air under your hand so that you push your tummy out as you breath in. This exercise can be quite tricky so it may need a bit of practice – but again only repeat it 2 - 3 times each time you try it as you may feel dizzy.

Exercise 4

Core stability

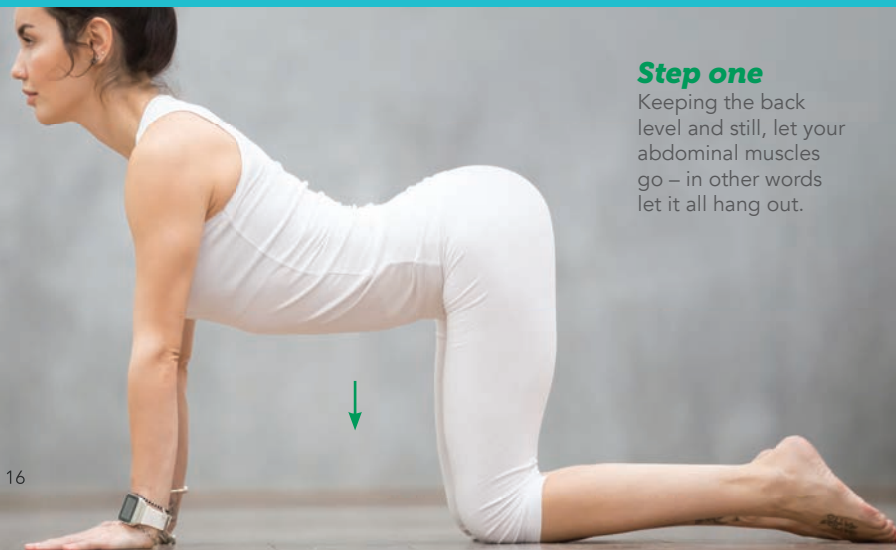
STARTING POSITION

Kneeling on all fours, weight evenly distributed.



Step one

Keeping the back level and still, let your abdominal muscles go – in other words let it all hang out.



You should be able to breath normally during this exercise as the action is below the waste. If you find it hard then count out loud while doing it – it will stop you from suffocating.

NB: This exercise can also be done in a sitting position. Sit ell back in a chair to support your back. Let your tummy go, then pull in from below the waist. Hold for a count of 10, if you can, then let go. Don't forget to keep breathing.

Kneeling exercises can be quite strenuous so make sure you can rest and that you can get back up off the floor. Unless you're very confident, it is a good idea to do these when someone else is in the house.

Step two

Then from a point below your tummy button pull up and in as if your stomach is trying to touch your backbone. Hold for a count of 10, if you can and then let go. Repeat 3 - 5 times.

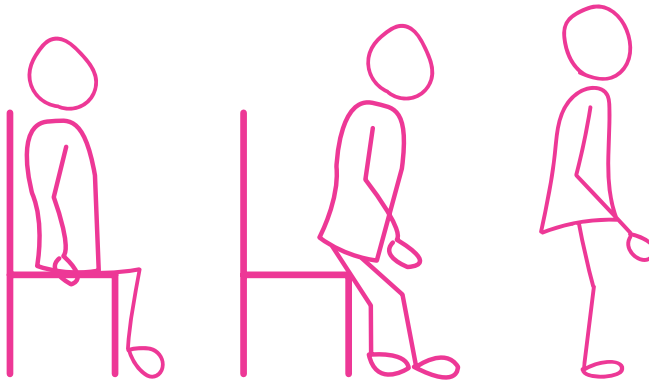



Exercise 5

Sit to stand

STARTING POSITION

Sitting on a firm surface e.g., edge of the bed on a stool chair or even the loo!





Standing up from a sitting position is a very good exercise to strengthen the legs, it can also be an exercise that challenges the balance. It is one of those exercises to do if you don't have time for a lot of different exercises. This one ticks more than one box.

If possible try to do this exercise without using your arms.

Put your hands on your knees and push down through your hands at the same time as through your feet to come up into standing. Stand up tall holding your tummy in for a count of 3 before pushing your bottom out, hands back on the knee and sit down slowly.

Repeat this exercise 3 – 5 times.

If your balance is not too good do the exercise in front of a table so you can put your hands down to steady yourself if necessary.

Strength Exercises



Exercise 1

Bridging

STARTING POSITION

Lying with knees bent up and the feet flat on the floor/bed about 12" (30 cm) apart



Step one

Tighten your buttocks, then raise them off the floor to form a bridge, then hold.

Step two

Then let down slowly. Repeat 3 - 5 times.



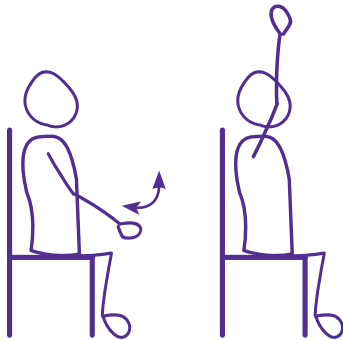
Be sure to raise straight up and down – try not to waver

Exercise 2

Double arm raise

STARTING POSITION

Sitting on a firm surface e.g. edge of the bed, on a stool/chair or even the loo!



Step one

Hold an umbrella, pole, rolling pin or something similar at hip level.

Step two

Keeping the elbows straight, raise the umbrella up and roll over your hand if you can without causing any pain, then lower slowly. Repeat 3 - 5 times.

This exercise can also be done in a laying position

Exercise 3

Wrist control

STARTING POSITION

Sitting at a table



Step one

Holding an umbrella, pole or rolling pin with both hands, rest your forearms on the table.

Step two

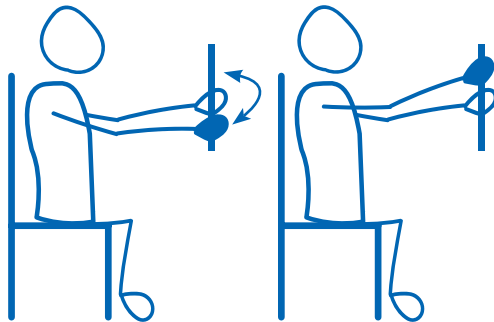
Lift the pole by extending the wrists, then lower. Keep your forearms on the table all the time. Repeat 3 - 5 times.

Exercise 4

Hand climb

STARTING POSITION

Sitting on a firm surface e.g. edge of the bed, on a stool/chair or even the loo!



Step one

Hold a pole/umbrella vertically, one hand above the other.

Step two

Walk your hands up and down the pole, hand over hand keeping your arms stretch out away from the body all the time. Repeat 3 – 5 times

NB: This exercise can also be done with a hoola-hoop

Exercise 5

Arm and leg stretch

STARTING POSITION

Kneeling on all fours, weight evenly distributed.



Step one

Lift one arm and the opposite leg at the same time, stretching both limbs away from your body.

Step two

Hold then lower slowly. Repeat with the other arm and leg. Repeat 3 – 5 times.

Kneeling exercises can be strenuous so make sure you can get rest afterwards and that you can get back up off the floor. Unless you're very confident, it is a good idea to do these when someone else is in the house.





References: <https://www.mstrust.org.uk/life-ms/exercise>

The information provided herein is intended to support and not replace the advice of your Healthcare Professional. Always seek the advice of your treating Healthcare Professional if you have any questions regarding your individual treatment plan. Report adverse events to drug.safety.southeastafrica@merckgroup.com.

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