

# Exercises For Seniors

1



**GET READY.** Focus on posture: Sit on your sitz bones (if you sit on your hands, you can probably feel them) rather than your tailbone. Tighten your belly (think about bringing your belly button toward your spine), lift the rib cage, hold your neck long and straight, and tuck your chin down and back so you feel a long stretch on the back of your neck. Feel like you have a string pulling up from the top of your head, suggests Mary Ann Wilson, RN, an ACE-certified trainer and host of *Sit and Be Fit* on PBS for almost 27 years. Breathe from the belly (you want your stomach to expand, not just your chest). That alone can be a tough position to hold at first! But work to build it up, because you'll need it for every other move you do.

2



**MARCH IN PLACE.** While you're holding an upright posture, march in place with your seat firmly planted. Swing the opposite arm as you march each foot forward. Anne Pringle Burnell, an ACE- and Aerobics and Fitness Association of America-certified trainer and founder of Stronger Seniors, suggests alternating marches with toe taps and heel taps. An easy choice for [adding] aerobics is when you reach and tap one toe forward, reach hands forward at the same time, Burnell says. Use either the same or opposite arm or both arms at once. You can reach higher and higher, or do a little boxing maneuver with jabs, uppercuts, a cross punch, and a hook. If you're new to exercise, marching in place with arm movements for 20 minutes will get your heart rate pumping to aerobic levels.

3



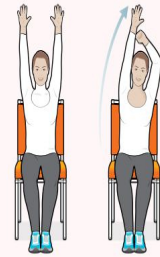
**SEATED JUMPING JACK.** Its no great leap to modify some traditional moves. Nicole Nichols, an ACE-certified personal trainer and fitness expert at [sparkpeople.com](http://sparkpeople.com), recommends the seated jumping jack. Start with knees bent and arms resting at your sides; then extend your legs, straight and wide, with heels on the floor, and raise your arms in a V. Then bring your limbs back to the center. Repeat for several minutes. It does actually elevate the heart rate and give you an aerobic benefit, but the key is to do it long enough at least 10 minutes or so, Nichols says.

4



**DO THE PEEKABOO.** This will work your entire upper body, says Langdon. Form a goalpost with your arms: Keep your upper arms (shoulders to elbows) parallel to the floor and your lower arms (elbows to hands) perpendicular to it. Bring your forearms together in front of your face. Return your arms to the starting point, squeezing your shoulder blades together, and repeat as long as you can hold proper form. Your back, chest, and arms will get a workout.

5



**RELEASE SOME TENSION.** Take a little back break during the day! Burnell says. This move works well even for office folks who have to sit at a desk, says Burnell. With the best posture you can muster, stretch and reach your arms overhead so that you're lengthening your spine. Alternate moving your hands as though you're climbing a rope, pulling yourself up. You'll notice that you're getting movement in your rib cage and spine. This is a great exercise to get people to not squish their spines, Burnell says.

6



**MOVE YOUR JOINTS.** We need to lubricate the joints, which means moving those joints in a gentle way, says Wilson. She says to get synovial fluid (the liquid that protects joints) moving, picture a sponge between each joint: When you flex it, you wring it out, and when you relax it, liquid is let back in. Shoulder rolls are great for this because they make four major muscle groups meet. Bring your shoulders forward, up to your ears, back, and then relax. Repeat as long as it feels good. Before you switch to roll your shoulders backwards, Wilson suggests letting your arms hang and swing gently, like pendulums. Its great for the rotator cuff, she says. Lubricating that joint with that pendulum move is something just about everybody can do.

7



**FOCUS ON EXTREMITIES.** Langdon suggests working the wrists first. Hold your arms straight in front of you and flex the wrist, as though you're saying "Halt!" Then rotate your palm so your fingertips point toward the floor. Repeat until you feel the stretch. When working the ankles, Langdon suggests drawing letters of the alphabet with each foot. Spelling your name, writing love notes to [your] sweetie, whatever! If you add resistance bands or light [ankle] weights, you can get a genuine strengthening workout as well, she says.

8



**GET HEAVY.** Adding some light exercise weights (dumbbells, weighted balls, or even a soup can) or resistance bands is an important way to gain strength. Nichols suggests getting a resistance band (found at some discount stores for as little as \$3) and anchoring it by sitting on it. Now you can work your entire upper body holding the ends of the band in your hands, try starting with bicep curls.

If you put all these moves together, you can work up to your 30 minutes of exercise per day. But if you're not there yet or don't have time for one longer workout, don't fret. You can exercise in 10-minute chunks. And if you're just starting off, start slow and listen to your body. You should not have any pain when you're exercising, says Wilson. If you go to a point of mild discomfort, then back off.

Talk to your doctor before making any big change in your exercise plan.