

**Chair Yoga For
Seniors: A Gentle
Sequence to Get
You Started \ (**

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A Gentle Sequence to Get You Started

By Nancy Coffin

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Welcome to Chair Yoga How to use this book

This book is designed to provide you with a basic introduction to chair yoga, and a sequence that can get you started. The sequence provided here is based on what works in my own teaching experience. It is organized as a complete class, and is intended to be practiced from start to finish. If you would like to practice individual exercises on their own, please make sure you have warmed up sufficiently.

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What is Chair Yoga?

Chair yoga is a gentle form of yoga that is practiced sitting in a chair, or standing using a chair for support. Chair Yoga can be practiced by just about anyone and can be practiced almost anywhere, with no need for specialized equipment or a large amount of space. Chair yoga classes or routines may involve gentle stretching, self-massage, meditation, breathing exercises, or a combination of these elements.

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Precautions

Check with your doctor before starting chair yoga or any exercise program. Chair yoga and the exercises in this book may complement any existing medical treatment and are not intended in any way to replace medical treatment.

I want you to improve your flexibility so that you will be able to continue reaching down to tie up your shoes, get up and down off a chair safely, and have the strength and flexibility to get up and down off the floor if necessary. Chair Yoga For Seniors is about helping you be independent for as long as possible in your life.

Your **pain free range of motion** is your range of motion that does not cause pain or even clicking in your joints. Always work within this range. Yoga should never cause more pain. If something hurts, try a more gentle version of the posture, or ask your teacher for help finding a modification that works for your body.

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Specific Health Issues

Osteoporosis:

Move slowly and with awareness to create space in your joints.

When twisting, take a gentle variation and NEVER use your arms to force or pull yourself into a twisted position.

When forward bending, move from your hip joints and avoid rounding your back. Imagine you are moving forward leading with your chest instead of your forehead.

Avoid bouncing and impact at all times.

High blood pressure:

Keep your head above your heart at all times.

Move slowly and with awareness.

Low blood pressure:

When rising from a forward bend (for example in a Sun Salutation), come up slowly to reduce the possibility of dizziness.

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Equipment

Clothing: Loose, comfortable clothing that you can move in is best. Pants with a flexible waist will allow for ease of movement, but you

can also loosen your belt a little if you prefer a regular waist.

Make sure that you are warm enough.

Yoga mat: A yoga mat under your chair helps to ensure the chair does not slide on the floor. A yoga mat will also cushion your feet in standing postures.

Block, bolster, and stool: Foam blocks, a bolster, or even a small stool can be helpful to ensure your feet are comfortably supported. You can use anything to raise your feet as long as it's stable. In a pinch you can use a book (like a large dictionary), but I wouldn't recommend a stack of books as it would be too unstable and might tip over.

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Chair: A sturdy chair without arms is preferable. If you only have a chair with arms, use that and if necessary adapt the postures to work around or with the arm.

Chair

14

15

Safety

Using a wheelchair: make sure the wheelchair is on a level surface and that the brake is engaged.

Leaning against the chair: For any posture where you are leaning against the chair (like a standing forward fold): push the chair up against a wall or make sure all of the legs are completely on a non-slip surface (like a yoga mat).

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General Tips

Find a chair you are comfortable in, put a block, bolster, or stool under your feet if your feet are not flat on the ground when sitting.

Keep the room at a comfortable temperature.

Sit tall in your chair, and relax your shoulders.

Smile and laugh.

18



Do yoga barefoot if possible (taking our shoes and socks off gives us a chance to take a look at our feet). If your feet get cold easily you can also try toe socks.

The socks pictured below are toe socks and are quite warm while still allowing full toe movement. Remember that socks can be slippery on smooth floors. Please be careful and use a yoga mat for standing postures on smooth floors when you are wearing socks.

Toe socks

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Tips for Yoga Teachers Having students sit facing you in a semi-circle allows everyone to see what you are doing as well as encourages connection and community-building among students.

Eye contact with students encourages open communication.

Work with whatever you have, and don't let the lack of ideal chairs stop you from sharing chair yoga. Chair yoga can be done safely on dining room chairs, sofas, wheelchairs and stools if necessary. Be creative but always aware of the safety of participants.

Be aware of any sliding of chairs. If the chairs seem to be slipping on the floor, try putting them on a non-slip surface, like a yoga mat, or push them up against a wall.

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Getting Started

Grounding

Sit in your chair with your hands resting in your lap or on your knees.

Feel the weight of your body on the seat and sense the chair, as if you have never sat in a chair before – how do your hips feel on the chair?

Move your body gently from side to side and front to back.

Feel how your feet touch the floor, bolster, stool or blocks.

Relax your shoulders and let your breath flow naturally.

23



Basic sitting position.

24



If your feet don't fully reach the floor when you are seated, raise your feet using blocks or a bolster.

Using blocks to raise feet.

25



Using a bolste r to raise fe e t.

26

27

Meditation

Set a timer for one or two minutes.

Relax your hands and shoulders.

Relax and close your eyes.

Become aware of your breath.

Pay attention to your breath as it comes in and out of your nose, don't try to change your breath at all; just notice it.

Notice if it is relaxed or strained

Notice if the inhale and exhale are the same length Notice what temperature the air is as it comes into and leaves your body.

28

29

Breathing Exercise

Alternate nostril breathing

Alternate nostril breathing is calming and good for balancing both sides of your brain.

As the name of this exercise suggests, you will be alternating between inhaling and exhaling through each nostril, closing each nostril one at a time with your thumb and finger of your right hand (see pictures below). Traditionally the right hand has been used, but it's okay to use either hand depending on what's more comfortable. I will describe the exercise using the right hand.

When you close each nostril do so gently, exerting only enough pressure to keep air from flowing through that nostril. This should require very little pressure.

Sitting comfortably, exhale through both nostrils.

Close your right nostril with your right thumb, inhaling through your left nostril.

Release your thumb and close your left nostril with your right forefinger, exhaling through your right nostril.

Keeping your left nostril closed, inhale through your right nostril.

Release the finger on your left nostril, close your right nostril with your right thumb and exhale through your left nostril.

This makes up one round. Start with one or two rounds gradually working up to several minutes of breathing like this. When you are finished, rest your hands on your lap and breathe normally through both nostrils.





Hand position for alternate nostril breathing.

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33



Traditional hand position for alternate nostril breathing.

The finger position in the three pictures directly above is the more traditional finger position for alternate nostril breathing. This position can be more challenging to start with if you have pain or stiffness in your hand or fingers. Try it out and see which hand position you prefer. You will still benefit from this breathing technique regardless of which position you choose.

If you would like to try it, make a fist with your right hand. Straighten your baby and ring fingers and your thumb. Gently press

your pointer and middle fingers into the fleshy area at the base of your thumb.

Turn your hand so that the palm side is facing you. Use your thumb to close your right nostril, and the side of your ring finger to close your left nostril. Proceed with alternate nostril breathing as explained above.

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Warm Up Your Body

Tapping and Self-Massage

Method:

Rub your hands together to warm them up.

When tapping on the areas indicated in the exercises, use a flat hand to tap, avoiding the joints.

When massaging the areas indicated in the following exercises, use soft, gentle pressure around the joints and on sensitive areas like your belly and face.

Precautions:

Avoid tapping directly on joints.

Massage with gentle pressure only.

Benefits:

Warms up the whole body.

Stimulates blood flow to the skin.

Releases tightness in the body.

Improves body awareness.

Improves alertness and coordination.

36



1. Feet

Foot massage .

37

Lift your right foot up and place it on your left knee. If this is uncomfortable for you try placing your raised foot on a stool or bolster (pictured below).

Look at your foot – are there any changes in colour or texture?

Start massaging your foot starting from the toes, working your way down to the heel and over to the top of your foot.

Can you interlace your fingers between your toes (pictured below), the same way you would clasp your hands together, but with one hand and one foot?

Repeat with your opposite foot.

38



Interlace fingers and toes.

39



Foot massage on a stool.

40



Foot massage on a bolster.



2. Calves

Calf tapping.

42

Gently tap all areas of the calf with a flat hand.

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat on your opposite calf.

43



3. Knees

Massaging the area around the knee .

Gently rub your knee, feeling the soothing warmth from your hands.

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat on your opposite knee.



4. Thighs

Thigh Tapping.

Gently tap and rub all areas of the thigh, including the back of the thigh.

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat on your opposite thigh.



5. Belly

Belly Rub.

Gently rub your belly in a clockwise direction.

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.



6. Arms

Arm Tapping.

Raise one arm and tap it with your opposite hand. Avoid tapping right on top of your wrist, elbow, and shoulder joints.

Make sure to tap on both sides of your arm, on your forearm and upper arm.

Gently rub your wrist, elbow, shoulder and armpit.

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat on your opposite arm.





7. Head and Neck

Head, neck, and face massage .

Gently massage the back of your neck, scalp, face, ears and front of your neck.

Continue for the duration of approximately 10-20 relaxed breaths.



8. Chest Tapping

Collarbone and chest tapping.

Your collarbones are the bones that stick out a little on either side of your chest just below your neck.

Gently tap your fingertips on and around your collarbones and right down along your sternum, or the flat bone (your breastbone) in the centre of your chest.

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.



9. Heart Rub

Heart rub.

With a flat hand, gently rub the area over your heart, on the left side of your chest.

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

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Let's Get Moving

Active Seated Postures

1. Toe Raises

Method:

Place your feet flat on the floor, or on a block, bolster or stool.

Move your toes up, keeping the ball of your foot on the ground.

Curl the toes under.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a foot or toe injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in toes and feet.

Improves the movement and stability of the foot.

Improves balance.

52



Raise toe s.

53



Curl toes under.

54

2. Ankle Rotations

Method:

Lift your foot off the floor and make circles with your ankle or for fun, try writing your name with your toes.

Duration:

Continue for the duration of approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat with your opposite ankle.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have an ankle injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in feet and legs.

Improves mobility of ankle joint.

Improves balance.

55



Ankle rotation.

56

3. Toe Point and Flex

Method:

Lift your foot off the floor.

Point your toes.

Flex your foot from the ankle bringing your toes back toward your shin.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times with each foot.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have an ankle injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in feet and legs.

Improves mobility of ankle joint.

Improves balance.

57



Point foot.

58



Flex foot.

59

4. Knee Hugs

Method:

Bring one knee up toward your chest.

Clasp your hands around your calf just below your knee.

Your arms can be either bent or straight.

Duration:

Hold for approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat with your opposite knee.

Precautions:

Make sure you are not putting any direct pressure on your knee with your hands.

Don't do if you have a knee or shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of knee and hip joints.

Stretches the muscles surrounding the hips and shoulders.

Gives digestive organs a gentle massage.

60



Hug knee , extended.

61



Hug knee , pulled in.

62

5. Hip Rotations

Method:

Rotate your leg from the hip making circles with your knee.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times clockwise and counter-clockwise, on each side.

Precautions:

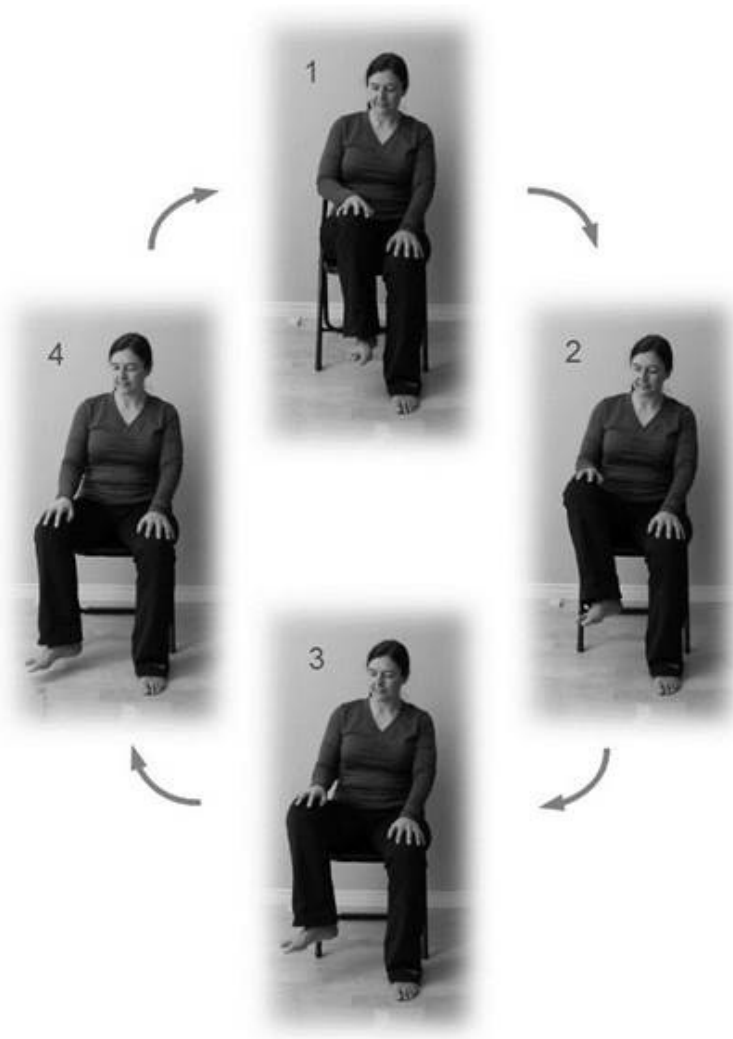
Don't do if you have a hip injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of hip joints.

Improves strength in the muscles surrounding the hip.

63



Hip rotations.

64

6. Finger Extensions

Method:

Raise both arms in front of you.

Alternate between spreading your fingers wide and closing your fist into a ball.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a finger injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in the hands and arms.

Improves mobility of finger joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the hands, arms, and shoulders.

65



Fingers extended.

66



Fingers flexed.

67



Fingers extended, side view.

68



Fingers flexed, side view.

69

7. Upside-Downside Finger Extensions Method:

Raise both arms in front of you.

Turn one palm to face the ceiling, the other palm to face the floor.

Alternate between spreading your fingers wide and closing your fist into a ball.

Switch your hands so the opposite palm is facing up and the opposite palm is facing down.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times in each direction.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a finger or shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in the hands and arms.

Improves mobility of finger and shoulder joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the hands, arms, and shoulders.

70



One hand up, one hand down, fingers extended.

71



One hand up, one hand down, fingers flexed.

72

8. Wrist Extensions

Method:

Raise both arms in front of you.

Extend your hands from the wrists so that your palms are facing away from you.

Flex your hands from the wrists so that your palms are facing your chest.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a wrist injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in the hands and arms.

Improves mobility of wrist joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the arms and shoulders.

73



Wrists e xte nde d.

74



Wrists flexed.

75

9. Wrist Rotations

Method:

Raise both arms in front of you.

Rotate your wrists in a clockwise direction.

Rotate your wrists in a counter-clockwise direction.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times in each direction.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a wrist injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

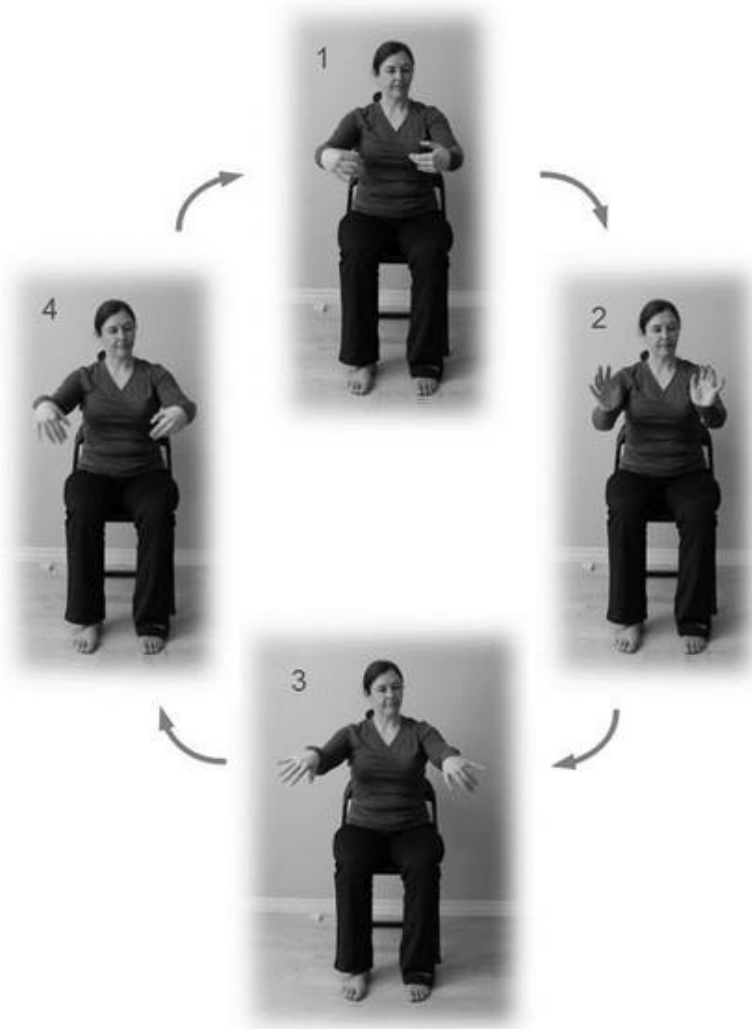
Benefits:

Increases circulation in the hands, arms, and shoulders.

Improves mobility of wrist joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the arms and shoulders.

76



Wrist rotations.

77

10. Elbow Extensions

Method:

Bring your arms to your sides with your palms facing forward.

Bring your finger tips to your shoulders.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have an elbow injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in the arms and shoulders.

Improves mobility of elbow joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the upper arms.

78



Elbows e xte nde d.

79



Elbows flexed.

80

11. Shoulder Rotations

Method:

Place your finger tips on your shoulders.

Make circles with your elbows.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times in each direction.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Remember to stay in your **pain free range of motion** here – your shoulder should not hurt when you rotate your elbow. See if you can find the right amount of rotation so that you cannot feel or hear any clicks within the shoulder joint.

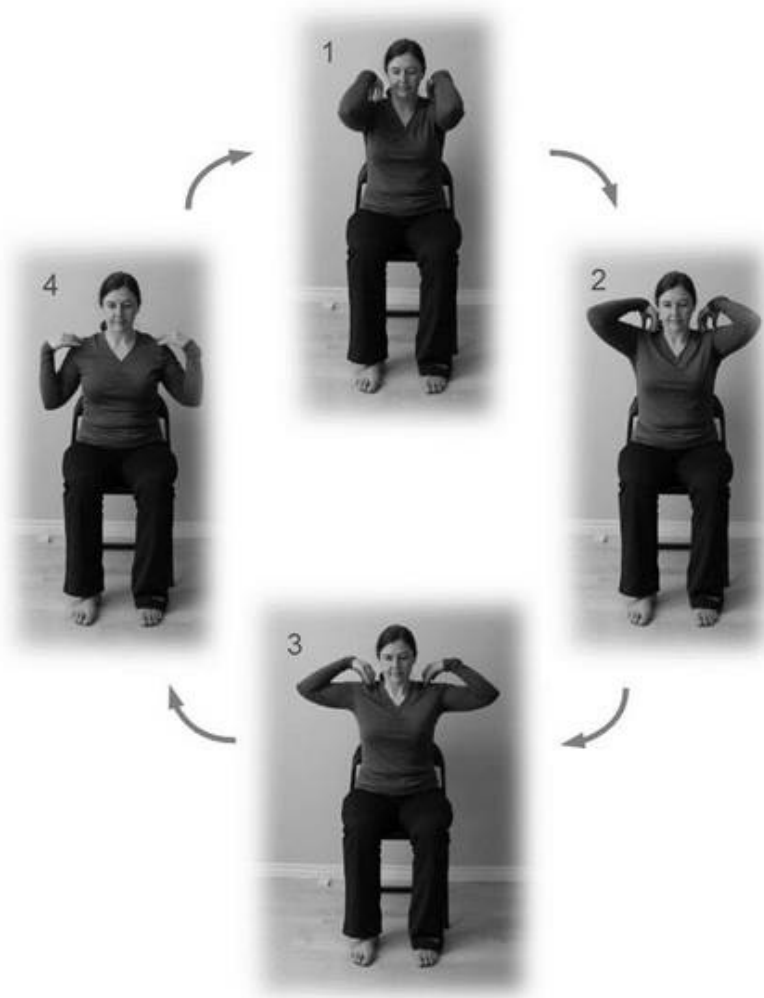
Benefits:

Increases circulation in the shoulders.

Improves mobility of shoulder joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the upper arms and shoulders.

81



Shoulder rotations.

82

12. Shoulder Raises

Method:

Start with your shoulders relaxed and your hands on your thighs.

Gently lift your shoulders up towards your ears.

Relax your shoulders back down.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Increases circulation in the shoulders.

Increases flow of lymph in the lymph nodes in the armpits.

Improves mobility of shoulder joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the shoulders.

83



Shoulders relaxed.

84



Shoulders raised.

85

13. Holding A Tray

Method:

Bring your hands in front of you with your palms facing up, as if you are holding a book or small tray.

Gently move your hands out to either side.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of shoulder joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the shoulders.



Holding a tray.



Holding a tray, hands at side .

88

14. Shoulder Swings

Method:

Bring your hands down and beside your hips with your palms facing behind you.

Raise your arms up at shoulder height or higher.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of shoulder joints.

Improves strength in the muscles in the shoulders.



Shoulder swings, arms extended backwards.



Shoulder swings, arms extended forward.

91

15. Head Tilts

Method:

Start with your shoulders relaxed and your hands on your thighs.

Gently tip your head to the right.

Bring your head back to the centre.

Gently tip your head to the left.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times on each side.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a neck injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Use caution if you have osteoporosis and make sure to only move as far as you are not experiencing any discomfort.

Benefits:

Stretches the muscles surrounding the neck.

Improves mobility of neck.

92



Head tilt to the right.

93



Head tilt to the left.

94

16. Looking Left and Right

Method:

Start with your shoulders relaxed and your hands on your thighs.

Gently turn your head to the right.

Bring your head back to centre.

Gently turn your head to the left.

Duration:

Repeat 5 times in each direction.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a neck injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Use caution if you have osteoporosis.

Make sure to only move as far as you are not experiencing any discomfort.

Benefits:

Stretches the muscles surrounding the neck.

Improves mobility of neck.

95



Looking right.

96



Looking left.

97

17. Sky and Sea Breathing

Method:

Place your hands together in front of your chest and gently exhale.

As you inhale, raise your right hand up and lower your left hand down.

As you exhale bring your hands back together in front of your chest.

As you inhale raise your left hand up and lower your right hand down.

As you exhale return your hands back together in front of your chest.

Try not to alter the speed of your breath, use the pace of your natural breath.

Try this with your eyes closed.

Can you feel where your hands are just before they meet in front of your chest?

Duration:

Continue for 5 or 10 cycles. One cycle includes both sides.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a shoulder injury.

Make sure to only move as far as you are not experiencing any pain or strain.

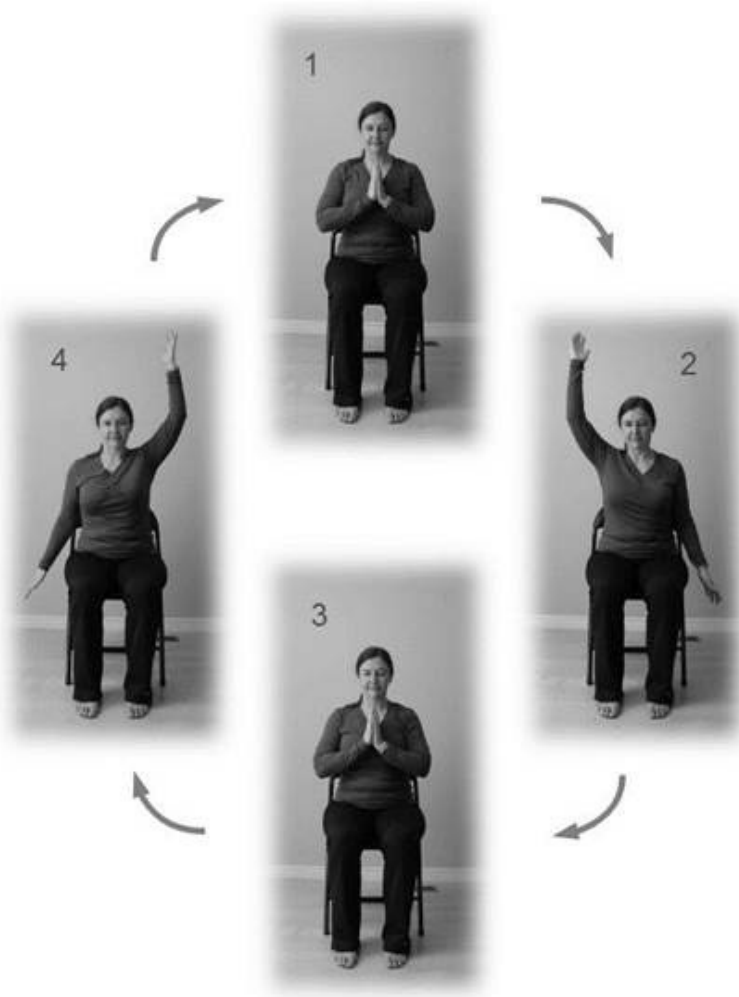
Benefits:

Improves body awareness.

Calms the nervous system.

Improves mobility of the shoulder joints.

98



Se a and sky breathing.

99

18. Figure 8 Tracing

Method:

Bring your hands up in front of your chest, about a foot apart with palms facing each other. This exercise can also be done one hand at a time.

Trace a figure 8 in the air in front of you with your hands (picture below).

Try changing the direction of your figure 8.

You can make big figure 8s or small figure 8s.

Make sure your figure 8 crosses the mid-line or center of your body.

For more of a challenge, change the direction several times.

Teacher Tip: Draw a figure 8 on a piece of paper and hold it up so that your student can trace it with the pointer finger on each hand. I have found this especially helpful for students with Alzheimer's and those who have experienced a stroke.

Duration:

Continue until you have traced approximately 10-20 figure 8s in each direction.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Benefits:

Improves body awareness.

Changing direction challenges the brain.

Improves mobility of the shoulder joints.

100



Figure 8 tracing

101

19. Sun Salutation Method:

Sit in your chair with your hands resting in your lap.

As you exhale, bring your hands together in front of your chest.

As you inhale, bring your hands together over your head. It is perfectly fine to keep your hands apart and raised over your head as well.

As you exhale, reach down and touch your toes.

As you inhale, slowly come half way up; place your hands on your knees.

As you exhale, reach down and touch your toes.

As you inhale, slowly bring your hands together over your head.

As you exhale, bring your hands together in front of your chest.

Duration:

Repeat this whole cycle 3-5 times.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

If you experience any dizziness, please rest in a seated position until it has passed.

This exercise should be done slowly and mindfully.

Always come up from touching your toes as slowly as is comfortably possible for you to reduce the possibility of dizziness.

A note about the forward fold in the Sun Salutation: when forward folding (touching your toes in this sequence), if you experience any discomfort or have osteoporosis; only come down halfway, with your elbows on your knees, instead of touching your toes.

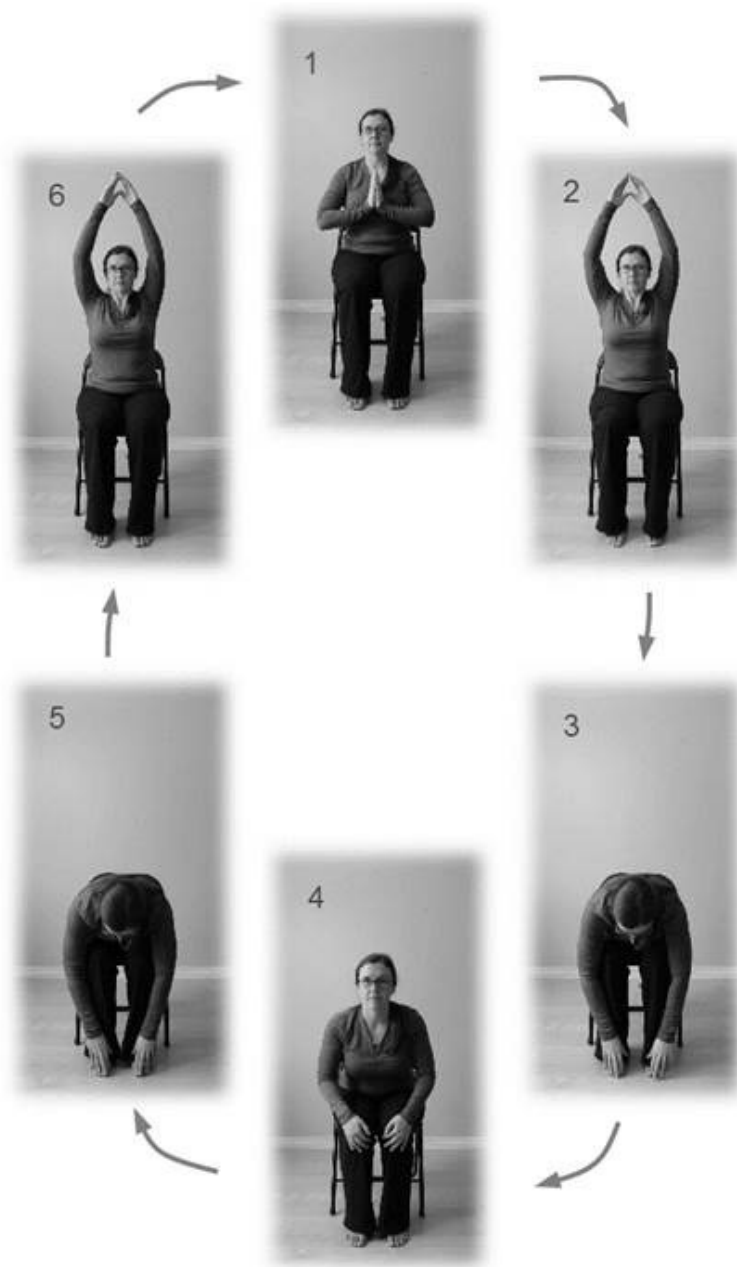
Benefits:

Improves body awareness.

102

Improves mobility of the shoulder and hip joints and the spine.

103



Sun salutation.

104

105

Held Seated Postures 1. Gentle Twist

Method:

Sit in your chair.

Start with your shoulders relaxed and your hands on your thighs.

Place both hands on your left thigh.

Gently twist your upper body toward the left, turning from the waist.

Hold.

Return your body back to centre.

Place both hands on your right thigh.

Gently twist your upper body toward the right.

Hold.

Duration:

Hold for 5 relaxed breaths on each side.

Repeat 5 times on each side.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain Remember to move slowly and mindfully.

If you have osteoporosis, do the gentle variation with both hands on your thigh.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the spine.

Stretches the muscles in the back.

106



Gentle twist.

107



Ge ntle twist from side .

You can also place your arm behind you on the chair for more of a twist.

108



Twist.

109



Twist from the side .

110

2. Side Bend

Method:

Sit in your chair.

Start with your shoulders relaxed and your hands on your thighs.

Raise your right arm over your head and lower your left hand to your side.

Gently bend toward the left.

Hold.

Make sure both hips stay grounded on the seat.

Return your body to centre.

Raise your left arm over your head and lower your right arm to your side.

Hold.

If this is too difficult, try with your raised hand resting gently on the top of your head or your shoulder, or your right hand on your lap (pictured below).

Duration:

Hold for 5 relaxed breaths on each side.

Repeat 5 times on each side.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain Remember to move slowly and mindfully.

If you have osteoporosis, take a very gentle variation, bending only slightly to each side.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the spine.

Stretches the muscles in the side.

111



Side be nd.

112



Side be nd, ge ntle .

113



Side bend, most gentle .

114

3. Shoulder Stretch with Strap Method:

Hold a yoga strap (or you can use a belt or tie) in your left hand.

Extend your left hand so that your arm is straight above your head and the strap is hanging down behind your head.

Bend your left arm so that your left hand is near your left shoulder and the strap is hanging down behind your back.

Reach behind your back with your right hand and try to grasp the strap as shown in the picture.

Bring your hands toward one another only as far as you can remain within your pain free range of motion.

Duration:

Hold for 5 relaxed breaths on each side.

Precautions:

Don't do if you have a shoulder injury or if this movement causes strain or pain.

Remember to move slowly and mindfully.

If there is any pain in this posture, let go of the strap and return your hands to resting in your lap.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the shoulder joints.

Stretches the muscles in the arms and shoulders.

115



Shoulder stretch with strap.

116

117

Standing Postures

1. Forward Fold

Method:

Stand about a foot away from the chair, with the back of the chair facing you.

Place your hands on the back of the chair.

Bend forward from your hips, keeping your knees over your ankles, and your hips over your knees.

Hold.

If this is comfortable, try turning the chair so that the seat is facing you.

Place your hands on the seat of the chair, bending forward from your hips.

Duration:

Hold for 5 relaxed breaths.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

Make sure your back and neck are straight.

Always make sure you are moving slowly and mindfully, bending from your hips.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the hip joints.

Stretches the muscles in the back of the thighs.



Ge ntle forward fold.

119



Forward fold.

120

2. Raised Knee Balance

Method:

Stand with the side of the chair facing you.

Place the foot closest to the chair up on the seat, making sure your whole foot is on the seat.

Balance here, holding on to the back of the chair.

If your balance is stable; try lifting your hand an inch off the back of the chair.

Duration:

Hold for 5 relaxed breaths.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

If the chair is too high, turn the chair around for balance and place your foot on a stool or block.

Remember to always move slowly and mindfully.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the hip and knee joints.

Improves strength of the muscles in the standing leg.

Improves balance.

121



Raise d knee e balance on chair.

122



Raise d knee e balance , hand off chair.

123



Raise d knee e balance using a stool.

124



Raise d knee balance using a block.

125

3. Hip Half-Circle

Method:

Stand with your left hip beside the back of the chair and your left hand holding onto the chair.

With your right leg straight, move your right foot: Forward and toward the chair.

Forward.

Out to the side.

Back.

Out to the side.

Forward.

Forward and toward the chair.

Duration:

Repeat this cycle 5 times.

Repeat the whole cycle with your opposite leg.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

Remember to always move slowly and mindfully.

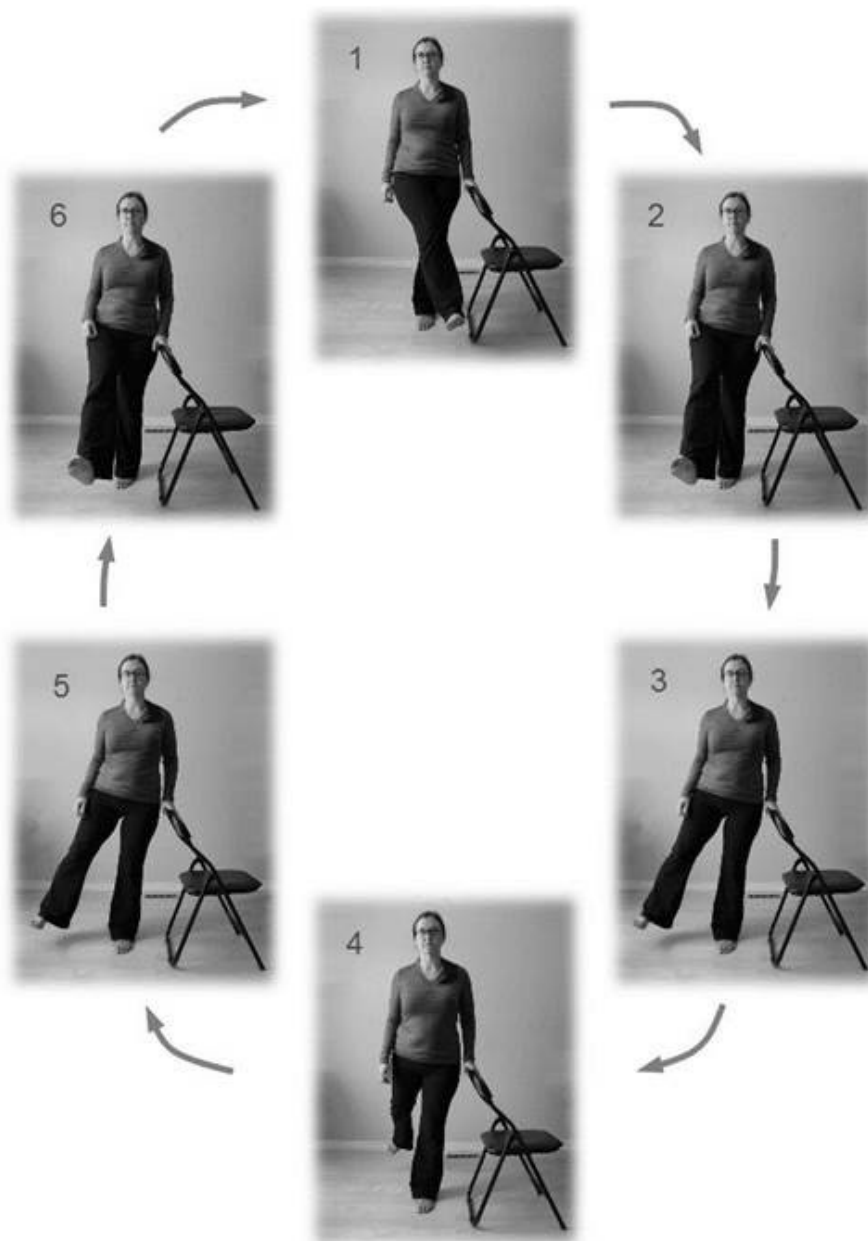
Benefits:

Improves mobility of the hip joints.

Improves the strength of the muscles in the standing leg.

Improves balance.

126



Hip half circle .

127

4. Tippy Toes

Method:

Face the back of the chair.

Place your hands on the back of the chair.

Rise onto your tiptoes.

See if you can raise and lower your heels as slowly and quietly as possible.

Duration:

Repeat 5-10 times.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

Make sure there is no impact when your heels touch the floor.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the ankle joints.

Improves foot mobility.

Improves the strength of the muscles in the calves.

Improves balance.

128



Tippy toe s h e e l r a i s e s .

129

5. Calf Stretch

Method:

Roll up a small towel and place it on the floor behind the chair.

Stand behind the chair with your hands on the back of the chair.

Step one foot forward.

Place the ball of this foot on the towel and keep your heel on the floor.

Keep your hips back and over the heel of the leg you're stretching.

Duration:

Hold for 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat with your other foot.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

Keep the heel of the calf you're stretching on the floor.

Benefits:

Stretches the calves.

Improves mobility of the ankle joint.

Improves balance.



Calf stretch.

131

6. Sitting to Standing

Method:

From seated, try to stand up as slowly and in the most controlled manner possible.

Return to seated.

You can hold onto the seat or extend your arms in front of you if you need to.

Duration:

Repeat at least 5 times.

Precautions:

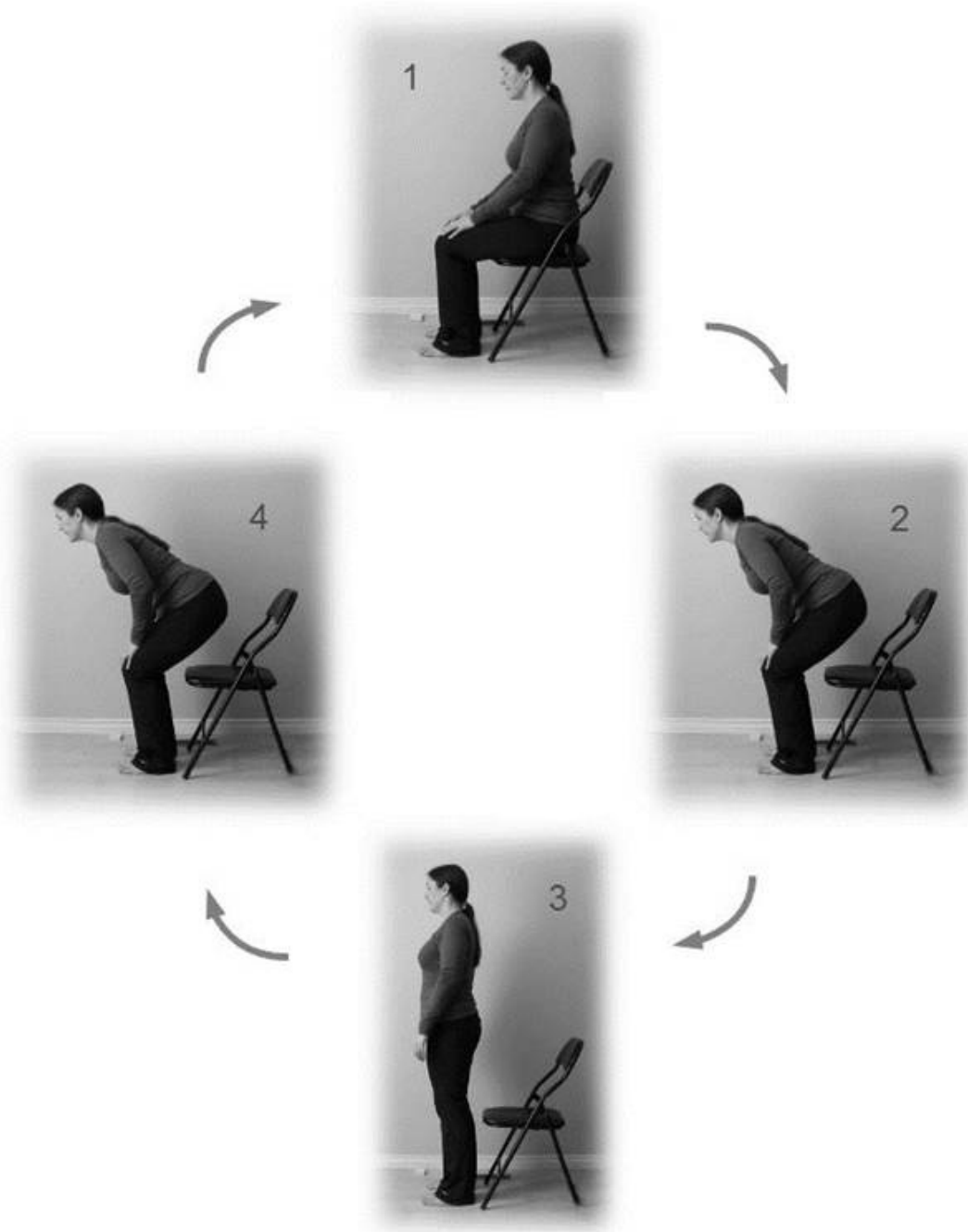
Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

If you feel very unbalanced, you can put a chair in front of you and use that to help you rise.

Benefits:

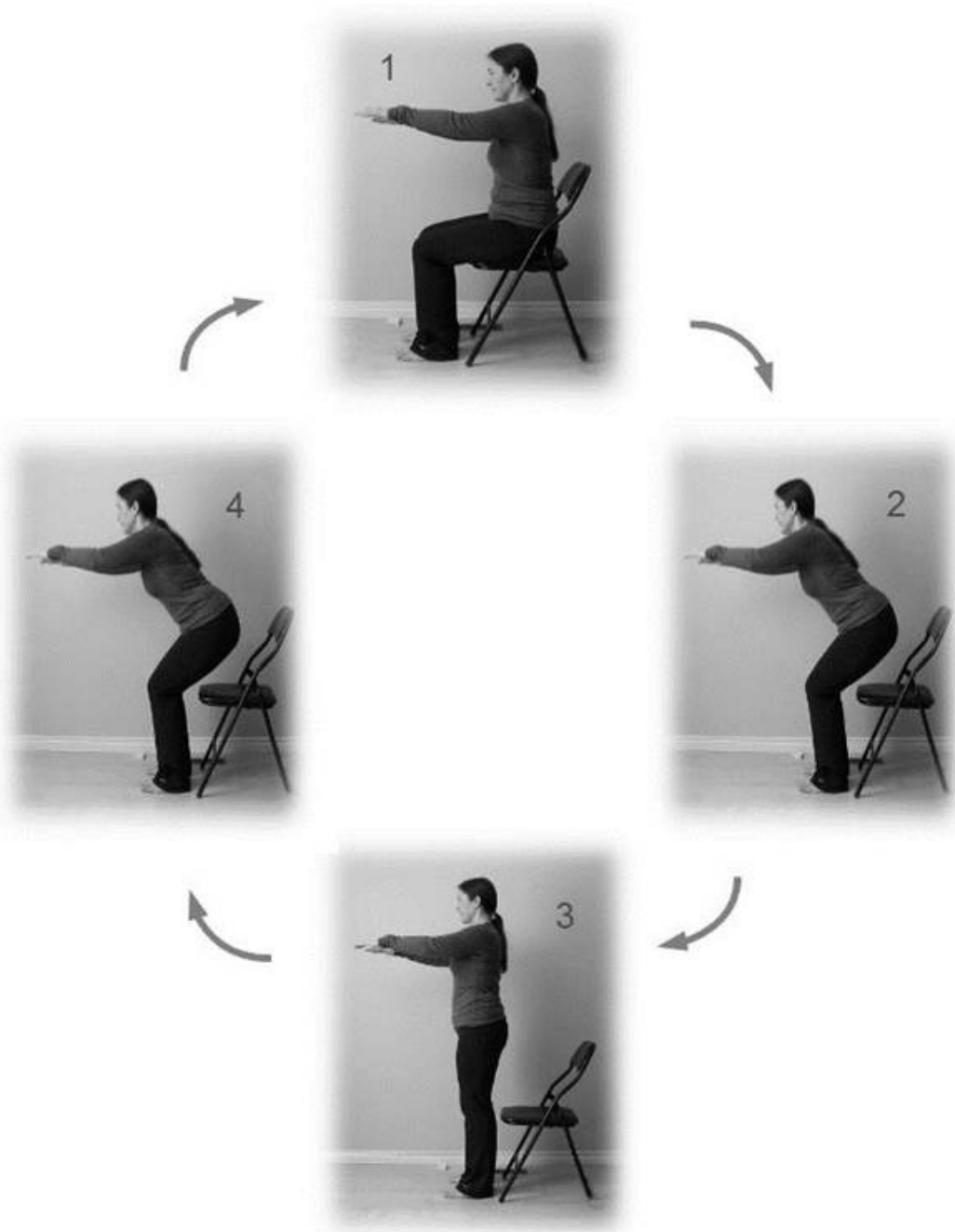
The goal of this exercise is to be able to move from sitting to standing and vice-versa in a controlled way.

132



Sitting to standing, hands on knees.

133



Sitting to standing, arms outstretched.

134

7. Floor to Standing

Method:

Stand beside the chair.

Use the chair to get down onto the floor, into a sitting position.

Use the chair to return to a standing position.

The chair will be most stable if you keep the seat toward you.

Duration:

Repeat at least 5 times.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

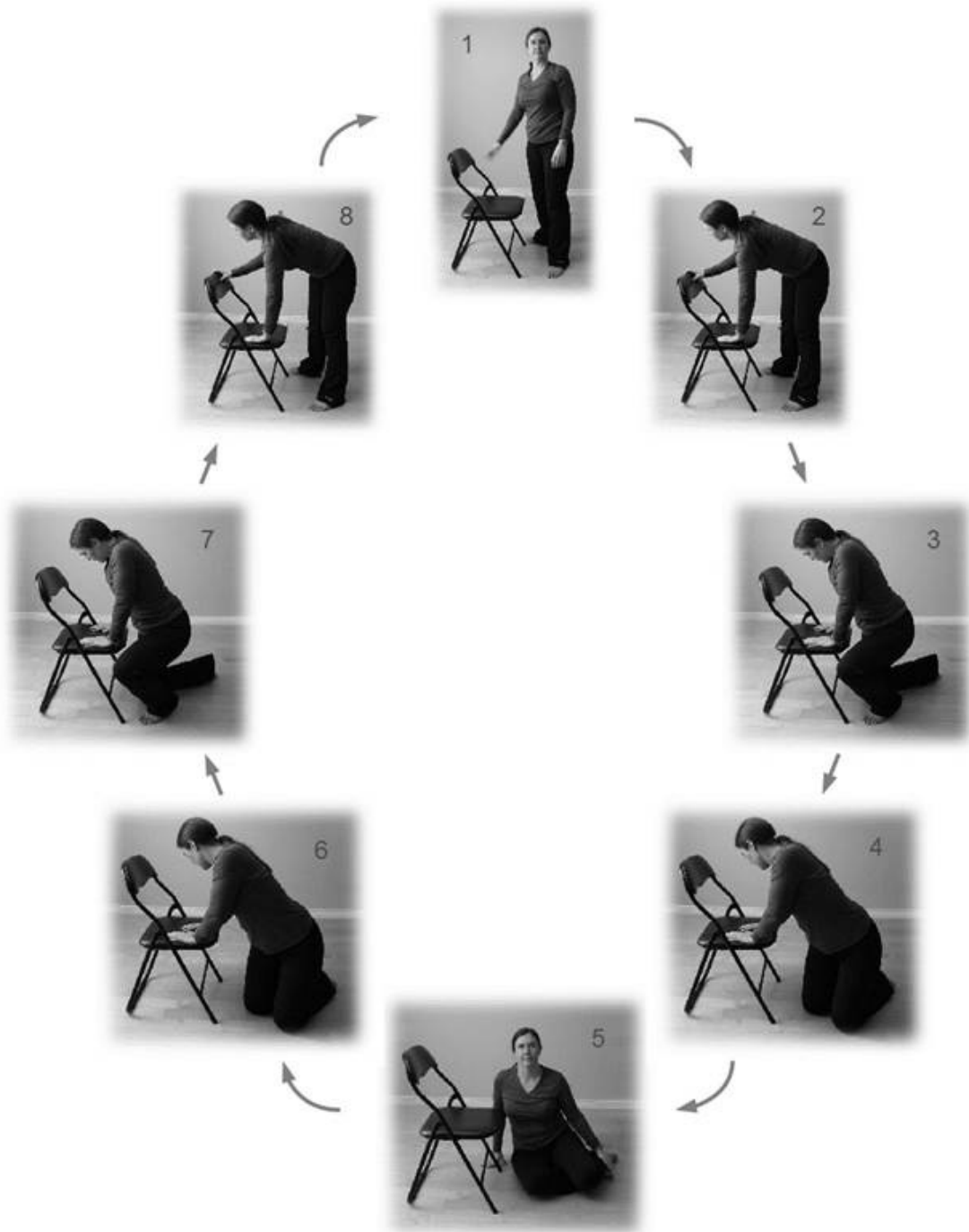
If you have tenderness in your knees, place a yoga mat on the floor where you will be sitting.

Benefits:

This is a useful exercise for building the strength required to get up and down off the floor. Working on this skill is critical since there are times when we may lose our balance and need to get ourselves back up off the floor.

If you only have the time or ability to practice one exercise in this whole routine on a regular basis, let it be this one.

135



Floor to standing sequence .

136

8. Tree

Method:

Stand behind the chair with your left hand resting on the back of the chair.

With your right hand on your hip, raise your right knee.

Place the toes of your right foot on the ground with your right heel resting against your left leg, or the sole of your right foot on your left leg below your knee.

If you feel balanced, try lifting your hand an inch off the chair, or try placing your hands together in front of your chest.

Duration:

Balance for approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat with your opposite leg.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

If your right sole is against your left leg, make sure it is resting below the knee. There should be no sideways pressure pushing on your standing knee.

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the hip joints.

Improves balance.

Improves body awareness.

Increases strength of the standing leg.



Tre e with toe s on the ground.

138



Tre e with foot on calf.

139



Balancing tree .

140



Tree with hands together in front of the chest.

141

9. Warrior I

Method:

Stand behind the chair with your feet hip width apart.

Bring your right foot back only as far as you can while keeping both feet fully on the ground. Your back toe should point slightly out to the side.

Bend your front knee, moving your hips toward the chair.

Relax your shoulders.

Ensure both hips are pointing toward the chair.

Both feet should be fully on the ground. If you can't keep your back foot fully on the ground, move it forward a couple of inches.

Keep your shoulders directly over your hips.

If this is comfortable, try placing your hands on your hips, or raise one or both arms above your head.

Duration:

Hold for approximately 5 relaxed breaths.

Repeat on the opposite side.

Precautions:

Do not do if this movement causes strain or pain.

Make sure your front knee does not extend past your front ankle (front knee should be directly above your front ankle).

Benefits:

Improves mobility of the hip and knee joints.

Improves balance.

Improves body awareness.

Increases strength in the legs.

142



Warrior 1, hands on chair.

143



Warrior 1, hands on hips.

144



Warrior 1, one arm raise d.

145



Warrior 1, one arm raised, from front.

146



Warrior 1, both arms raise d.

147

148





Cooling Down

Palming

Method:

Sit in your chair.

Take off your glasses.

Rub your hands together until you feel warmth in them.

Slightly cup your hands and gently place them over your eyes, feeling the warmth of your hands on your eyes.

Your eyes can be open or closed according to your preference.

Duration:

Hold for 1-5 minutes.

Precautions:

Make sure you are not putting any pressure on your eye balls.

Benefits:

Feels good.

Calming.

149



Rubbing hand together to warm up.

Place palms over eyes.

150

151

Final Relaxation

Method:

Relax your hands, resting them on your lap.

Let your whole body relax.

Close your eyes and pay attention to your relaxed breathing.

When you are finished; slowly open your eyes and wiggle your fingers and toes.

When getting up from your chair, do so slowly and in a controlled way to avoid dizziness.

Enjoy the rest of your day.

Duration:

Hold for up to 5 minutes.

Precautions:

None, relaxation is suitable for everyone.

Benefits:

Feels good.

Calming.

Allows time for your body to start integrating the benefits of your yoga practice.

152



Final relaxation.

153

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Conclusion

I hope that this sequence has been useful to you, both as a practice in itself, and a starting point to get you excited about creating your own chair routines. Bringing activity into your life or sharing it with others is a tremendous gift and I'm grateful for the opportunity to spread this information.

For more information about yoga for seniors, please visit the web page www.all-about-yoga-for-seniors.com.

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