

10 chair yoga poses for older people



Have you heard of the benefits of chair yoga for older people?

Perhaps you're not sure how to get started?

Here are 10 poses you can try for yourself at home.

You'll just need a stable chair with no arms. Be sure to place your chair on a flat surface somewhere you have room to extend your arms around you. It might be nice to choose a place with natural light and a pleasant view.

Important information

Before you begin, remember to listen to your body. Stretches should feel comfortable, not painful.

Stop and seek advice from a medical professional if you feel any new or increasing pain or if you feel dizzy, clammy, or short of breath. Some of these exercises may not be for you. Consult a medical professional if you are unsure.

And consider keeping a friend nearby when trying these exercises.

Cat cow stretch

- Your back should be straight and your shoulders above your hips. Keep your knees above your ankles, hip-width apart. Brace your abdominal muscles.
- Curve your shoulders inwards and gently slump forward to create the cow pose. Bring your shoulders back and lift your chest and chin to create the cat pose.
- Allow your back to arch backward and forward only as much as you feel is comfortable.
- Inhale with cat, exhale with cow. Allow the movement to direct your breath.



Neck stretch

- Keeping your back and shoulders straight, drop your chin to your chest to stretch the back of your neck. Relax into this position with a deep breath in and out.
- Bring your chin up towards the ceiling, as far as feels comfortable, and take another slow breath. Return your head to its natural position.
- Inhale and extend your neck by imagining that you are lifting the top of your head towards the ceiling. On the exhale, drop your right ear slowly towards your right shoulder.
- Inhale and return the top of your head slowly towards the ceiling. As you exhale, bring your left ear towards your left shoulder. Take your head back to its natural position as you inhale again.



Reverse arm hold

- Begin with your back straight, sitting forward in your chair. Inhale and extend your arms slightly on either side of you, low and wide, palms facing down.
- As you exhale, turn your palms to face behind you, allowing your shoulders to roll forwards. Keep your back as straight as you can.
- Bend your elbows as your hands swing towards each other behind your back. Grasp your fingers, hands, wrists, or elbows with each hand and gently pull. Only pull as much as is comfortable.
- If you have clasped one wrist or elbow and not both, remember which one. If you have clasped yourself with both hands, remember which side is on top. Balance the exercise by spending as many breaths here as you do on the other side.



Spinal twist

- Begin with your back straight, sitting forward in your chair. Plant your hips firmly into the seat and root your feet to the ground. Lift your arms out in front of you at a wide angle, palms down.
- Slowly, you can turn your shoulders towards the left, until your left arm touches the back of the chair and your right arm rests over your left knee. Don't use the chair's back to force a deeper twist. Just rest your arm on top of it. Or against it, if it's too high.
- Be slow and careful as you return to centre. And then do the same for your right side.

Seated leg extensions

- For this pose, you can keep your hands by your side and grip your seat for stability. With a straight back and both feet comfortably on the floor, take a deep breath in.
- As you let your breath out, slowly raise one leg by straightening at the knee. You may alternate between pointing and flexing your foot.
- When ready, let your leg lower as you inhale, until both feet are back on the floor. Then, do the same for the other leg. Stop the exercise if you feel pain in your knee.



Seated mountain

- Sit straight in the front half of your seat and engage your core. Have your knees bent at right angles above your ankles. Have both knees and ankles hip-width apart.
- Inhale slowly. On the exhale, let all the tension go from your shoulders as they lower down. Hold your arms slightly out to your sides. Keep them low and wide, with your wrists in a relaxed position, palms facing inward. Focus on your breathing.
- When you're ready, you can turn your wrists outward. Notice how this stretches the muscles in your arms and turns your sternum upward.



Chair warrior 1

- Keep your back straight. Raise your arms outward and meet your fingertips together in a triangle above your head.
- You may find it difficult to bring your fingertips together. If so, you can opt for an arm raise with palms apart and facing each other.
- Breathe in deeply as you raise your arms, and exhale slowly as you lower them again.



Ready to try something harder?

Advanced - chair warrior 2

- Try this more advanced pose near a wall. Be sure to have a friend or family member nearby to mitigate the risk of falling.
- Sit with a straight back, facing forward. Bring your right leg over to the right side of the chair. You can do this by crawling your foot along the floor until your right knee is pointing to the right.
- You may use your hands to support yourself on the seat as you create this pose. Once settled, your face should be turned towards the horizon over your right knee. Your quadriceps will be creating an L shape. If you feel stable, raise your arms to point at the horizon in front and behind you, palms down. Look out over the fingertips of your right hand.
- You can brace yourself with your hands on the seat when you return to a normal sitting position. Balance your body by doing the same pose for the other side.



Advanced - seated pigeon

- This pose is also more advanced and requires some joint flexibility. Never push or pull your knees or ankles past where they can comfortably go.
- Sit upright with both feet on the floor. Bring your right ankle up and rest it on your left thigh. Your left hand may be resting on your right ankle, your right hand on your right thigh.
- Use your hands to carefully help your right foot return to the floor. Remember to take relaxing breaths and do the other side. Both sides may not be equally as flexible.



Ready to cool down?

Finish with a forward fold

- If you notice pain when trying this pose, use pillows on your lap as support. Use as many as you need to avoid pain.
- Begin with a straight back. Allow your shoulders to relax with an exhale. As you inhale, lengthen your spine. Imagine you are lifting the top of your head towards the ceiling.
- From your hips, you can begin to lean forwards on the exhale. Keep your back straight for as long as you comfortably can. Once your hips have bent as much as they want, allow your spine to keep folding forwards. Let yourself slump over your knees or pillow supports. Let your hands hang low. With each outward breath, let go of any tension you find in your body.
- You can bring your hands up to your thighs to support yourself as you slowly roll back upright. If you feel a head rush from coming back up, hold onto your seat until it settles.



What's next?

If you want a more guided session, you can look for instructional videos online, or find a local group in your community to practice with.

And once you've mastered these seated poses, you may want to advance the difficulty level. You may even want to try standing poses that include the chair as support.

Always ask a professional when planning to advance your fitness practice.

More helpful information

If you would like to find local exercise classes, social activities, and helpful tips, try the [LiveUp quiz](#) or get in touch with one of our helpful team on **1800 951 971**.

CONTACT US

Website: liveup.org.au

Email: support@liveup.org.au

Phone: 1800 951 971

Facebook: facebook.com/LiveUpAus

LiveUp is a healthy ageing initiative funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.