

# **Exercises For Chronic Widespread Pain**

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### **Principles for Moving with Pain**

- Only contract or stretch as far as is comfortable, even if this feels like you aren't doing much.
- If you 'pay for it later', you need to modify the exercises with the F.I.T.T. principles (for example, 5 repetitions instead of 10).
- It is very important to keep breathing during the exercise.

### **What's in this booklet?**

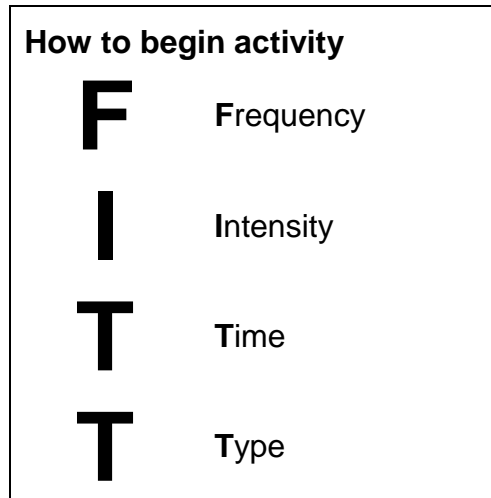
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## Starting to Move and Exercise Again

If you have chronic pain and stay active, you may have less pain

You may have found it difficult to increase your activity in the past

We want to help you get started



### Frequency and Time

- Exercising every day is better than exercising once a week.
- The exercise should challenge your pain but not cause it to flare-up.
- If you walk for 10 minutes and your pain increases to an amount that you can tolerate, it should return to your normal pain level in 1 to 2 hours.

### Intensity

- Intensity is the amount of physical effort in an activity.
- Some exercises require a higher level of intensity than others.
- Running has a higher intensity of physical activity than walking.
- You can alter the intensity of an exercise like walking by:
  - Walking on a flat surface or up and down hills
  - Walking on a track, treadmill, or a trail
  - Walking with taking larger or smaller steps
  - Walking faster or slower

## Type

- There are many ways to exercise and there is no best exercise.
- Examples of types:
  - Cardiovascular training like walking, cycling, and swimming
  - Strength training like weight training and resistance exercise
  - Flexibility exercise like stretching programs
- Some exercises combine strength training, cardiovascular, and stretching such as Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, and aqua-aerobics.
- It is important to choose an exercise that you enjoy and are able to do.

## Using F.I.T.T. Principles – an example

If you walk around your neighborhood once a week for 20 minutes and have a flare-up of pain that lasts for several hours or days, you should:

- Try walking around the neighborhood for 5 minutes at the same pace.
- Try increasing the frequency by walking for only 5 minutes every day.

## How to increase your exercise level

- We suggest repeating your starting level at least 3 times before increasing.
- Plan on making small increases at a time.
- Only change one of the F.I.T.T. principles at a time.

Here is how to increase your exercise slowly:

1. Increase the amount of time that you walk:  
5mins ► 6mins ► 7mins ► 9mins ► 11mins
2. Increase the frequency by walking for 5 minutes 2 or 3 times a day.
3. Increase the intensity by walking for 5 minutes on a different surface or walk at a different pace.

**Remember to only change one F.I.T.T. at a time**

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## Core Strengthening Exercises

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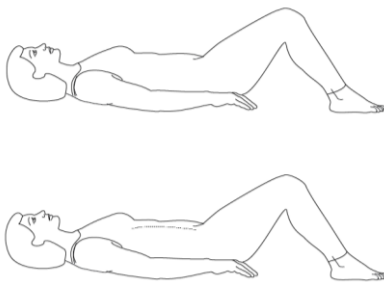
### The Basics

People with chronic pain have discomfort when moving around. Here are some basic exercises to help get your body moving slowly, gently, and safely.

**Goal:** 5 to 15 repetitions ♦ 1 to 2 sets at a time ♦ 1 to 2 times a day

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#### 1. Abdominal Contraction



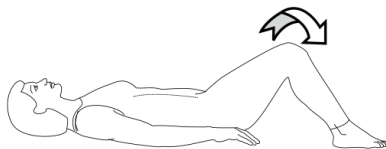
##### How:

1. Feel for the front of your hip bones.
2. Now move 4 cm. (1 ½ inches) inward towards your belly button.
3. Gently try to 'hold your pee in' or pretend to 'squeeze into tight pants' for 10 seconds. You should feel a gentle muscle contraction below your fingers.
4. Relax.

##### Notes:

- Keep breathing.
- Shoulders and low back stay relaxed on the floor.
- Do not arch your back.
- Do not 'suck in' your tummy.

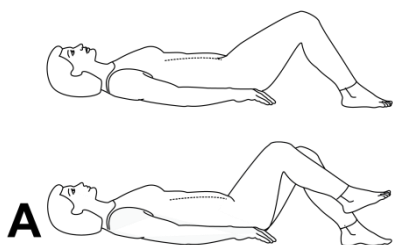
**Why:** This muscle helps to support the back. If needed, contract this muscle for all exercises.



##### Progression:

1. Tighten your abdominal muscles (steps 1 to 3).
  2. Hold the contraction.  
Keep breathing.
  3. Gently let one knee fall to the side a few centimeters (an inch or so).
  4. Gently pull the knee back to neutral.
  5. Repeat on other leg.
  6. Relax.
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## 2. Knee Fold

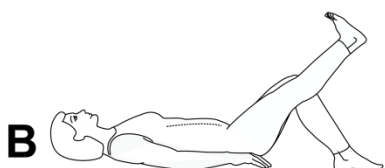


### How:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
3. Breathe out and lift one knee towards your chest.
4. Lower the leg down.
5. Relax.

### Notes:

- Do not hold your breath.
- Do not arch your back.



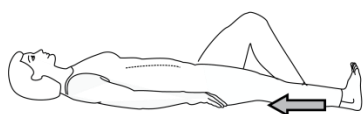
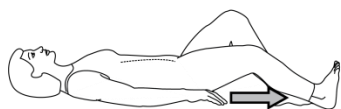
### Progressions:

**B:** Same as 'A' but straighten the leg.



**C:** Add arm movements. Raise opposite arm up as other leg straightens (for example: right arm with left leg)

## 3. Heel Slide



### How:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent.
2. Slowly straighten one leg by sliding the heel along the floor.
3. Slide the heel back up to the starting position.

### Notes:

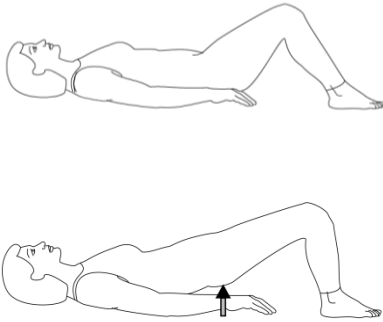
- Only slide as far as comfortable.
- Keep your heel on the floor at all times.
- Do not hold your breath.



**Progressions:** Add arm movements, raising the opposite arm up as you slide the other heel.

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#### 4. Bridge



##### How:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent.
2. As you breathe out, slowly lift your bottom up a few inches off the floor.
3. Squeeze your buttocks muscles as you lift it upwards.
4. Hold for 4 seconds.
5. Slowly lower your buttocks.

##### Notes:

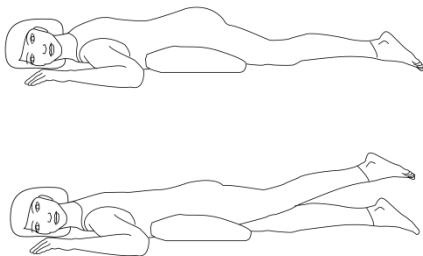
- Keep your hips at an even level when lifting.
- Try to keep your abdominal muscles tight.
- Do not arch your back.

If this is too hard for you then start with modified bridge.

**Modified bridge:** Practice squeezing your buttocks muscles without lifting it off of the floor.

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#### 5. Hip Extend



##### How:

1. Lie on your stomach with a pillow under hips.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
3. Slowly lift one leg up a few inches, keeping your knee straight.
4. Hold for 4 seconds.
5. Slowly lower your leg.

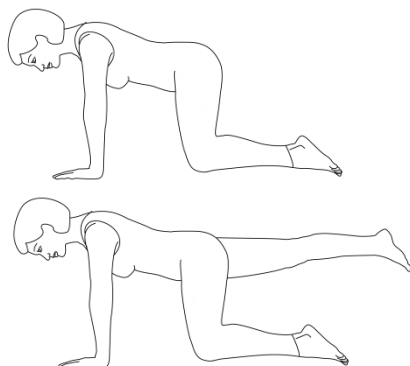
##### Notes:

- Do not arch your back.
- Do not hold your breath.

If your back hurts with this exercise, just contract the leg/buttocks without lifting the leg.

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## 6. Hip Slide



### How:

1. Start on your hands and knees.
  - Keep knees hip width apart.
  - Keep hands shoulder width apart.
  - Keep back and neck in a straight line.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
3. Slowly straighten one leg backwards.
4. Hold for 4 seconds.
5. Slowly lower your leg.

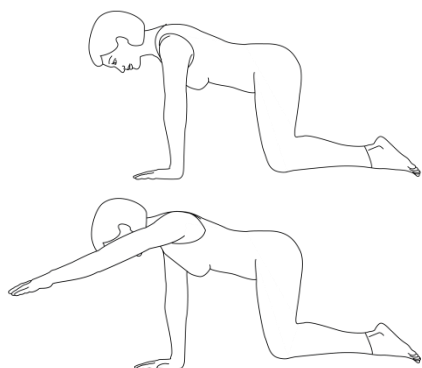
### Notes:

- Do not arch your back.
- Keep abdominal muscles tight.

If this is too hard, slide your leg back but keep foot on the floor.

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## 7. Superman



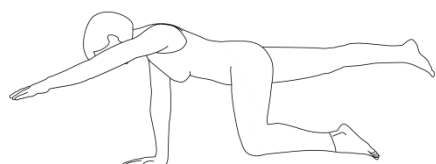
### How:

1. Start on your hand and knees.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
3. Slowly lift one arm upwards.
4. Hold for 4 seconds.
5. Slowly lower your arm.

### Notes:

- Do not arch your back.
- Keep abdominal muscles tight.
- Keep your neck and back in line.

If this is too hard, slide your hand forward but keep contact with the floor.



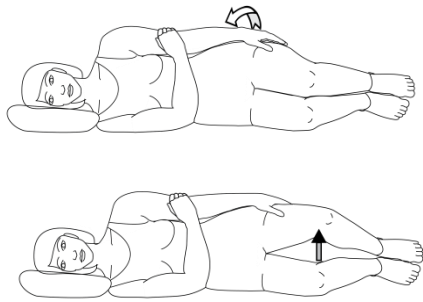
**Progressions:** Combine the Hip Slide and Superman, using the opposite arm and leg (for example: left arm and right leg)

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## 8. Clamshell



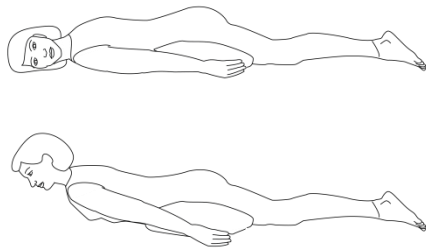
### How:

1. Lie on your side with your knees and hips bent.
  - Keep your heels together.
2. Roll slightly forward.
3. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
4. Slowly lift the top knee upwards a few inches.
5. Hold for 4 seconds.
6. Slowly lower the knee down.

**Progressions:** To make it harder, tie a TheraBand™ around your knees.

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## 9. Back Extend



### How:

1. Lie on your stomach with a pillow under your hips.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
3. Slowly lift your chest a few inches.
4. Hold for 4 seconds.
5. Slowly lower your chest back down.

### Notes:

- Do not extend the neck.
- Do not hold your breath.

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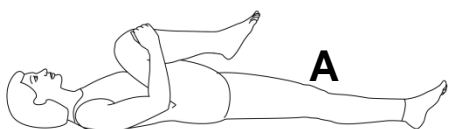
## Stretching Exercises

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**Goal:** 1 to 2 repetitions ♦ Up to 3 times a day ♦ Hold the stretch for 20 to 30 seconds.

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### 1. Knee Hugs



#### How:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent.
2. As you breathe out, gently pull one knee towards your chest.

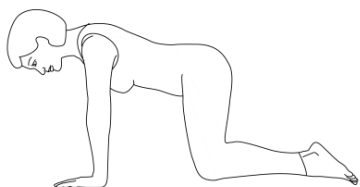
#### Progression:

**A:** Knee hug with one leg straight

**B:** Double knee hug

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### 2. Prayer Stretch



#### How:

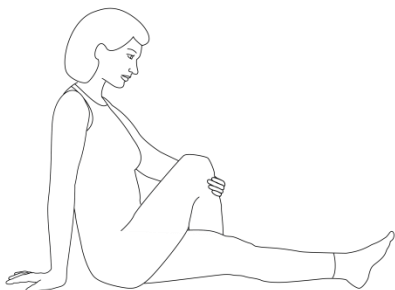
1. Start on your hands and knees
2. As you breathe out, lower your bottom towards your feet.
3. Slowly reach your arms forward.

#### Option:

Place your hands under your forehead, or by your side. You can also use a pillow in between your heels and buttocks.

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### 3. Hip Stretch



#### How:

1. Sit up tall.
2. Bend one knee up toward your chest.
3. Cross the foot over the other leg.
4. As you breathe out, gently pull your knee up towards your chest.
5. Twist your upper body towards the bent knee.

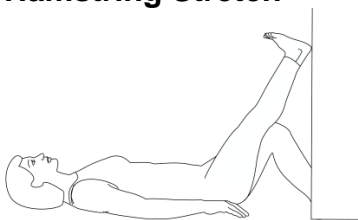
#### Option:

Lie on your back and pull the knee across your body.

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#### 4. Hamstring Stretch



##### How:

1. Lay down with one leg up on the wall.  
You should feel a gently stretch at the back of your leg.
2. Move closer to the wall for more of a stretch.  
If you feel any sharp pain, move away from the wall.

##### Option:

While sitting in a chair, straighten one leg out. Stretch by leaning forward from your hips.

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#### 5. Piriformis Stretch



##### How:

1. Lie on your back.
2. Cross one ankle over the other knee.
3. Reach to the bottom leg's thigh.
4. Gently pull the thigh towards you.

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## Upper Body Strengthening Exercises

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**Goal:** 5 to 15 repetitions ♦ 1 to 2 sets at a time ♦ 1 to 2 times a day

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### 1. Neck Setting



#### How:

1. Lie on your back with your head on a pillow.
2. Gently tuck your chin in like making a 'double-chin'.

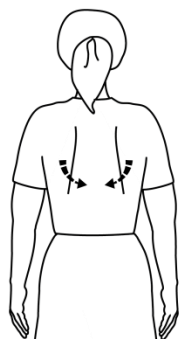
#### Notes:

- Keep breathing.
- Keep your shoulders on the floor.
- Do not bring your chin to your chest or poke your chin out.

**Why:** This muscle helps to stabilize your neck.

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### 2. Shoulder Blade Squeeze



#### How:

1. Stand or sit in a supported chair.
2. Pull your shoulder blades down and together as if you are putting them in your back pockets.
3. Hold for 3 seconds.
4. Relax.

#### Notes:

- Keep breathing.
- Keep your shoulders and neck relaxed.
- Do not arch your back.

#### Progression:

While squeezing your shoulder blades, move your arms:

- A. Forward and back
  - B. Out to the sides
  - C. Rotate your forearms
- 

### 3. Neck Rotation



#### How:

1. Lie down on your back or sit in a supported chair.  
If sitting, sit tall.
  2. Place the fingertips from one hand on the side of your head.
  3. Turn your head towards your fingers, **gently** pressing against your fingers.
  4. Hold for up to 4 seconds.
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## Upper Body Stretching Exercises

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**Goal:** 1 to 2 repetitions ♦ Up to 3 times a day ♦ Hold the stretch for 20 to 30 seconds.

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### 1. Forward Bend Stretch



#### How:

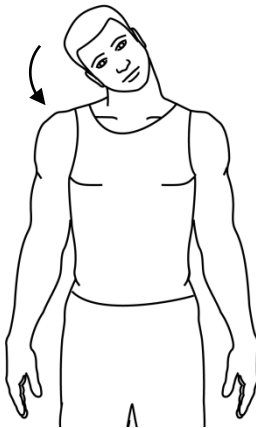
1. Sit in a chair or stand up tall with your arms hanging at your sides.
2. Bring your shoulders back and chest up.
3. Bring your chin to your chest, looking downward.

#### Notes:

- You should feel a gentle stretch down the back of your neck.

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### 2. Side Bend Stretch



#### How:

1. Sit in a chair holding onto the chair seat or stand up tall with your arms hanging at your sides.
2. Bring your shoulders down and back while lifting your chest up.
3. Tilt your head to the side, bringing your ear toward your shoulder. Tip your head forward for a deeper stretch.

#### Notes:

- You should feel a gentle stretch down the side of your neck.
- If the stretch is too much, rest your arms on your lap (if sitting) or cross them (if standing).

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### 3. Bend and Rotate Stretch



#### How:

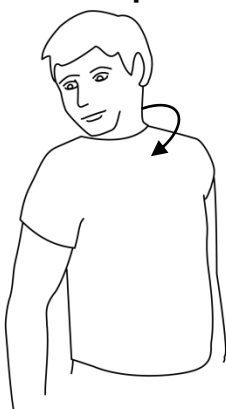
1. Sit in a chair or stand up tall.
2. Put your right hand on your left shoulder.
3. Tilt your head to the right side, bringing your right ear toward your right shoulder.
4. Point your first finger on your right hand.
5. Now turn your head slightly to try and look at that finger.

#### Notes:

- You should feel a stretch on the left side of the front of your neck.
6. Repeat with the left hand on your right shoulder.

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### 4. Head to Armpit Stretch



#### How:

1. Sit in a chair holding onto the chair seat or stand up tall with your arms hanging at your sides.
2. Bring your shoulders down and your chest up.
3. Turn your head toward your armpit.

#### Notes:

- You should feel a gentle stretch down your neck.
- If the stretch is too much, rest your arms on your lap (if sitting) or cross them (if standing).

#### Progression:

If looking to the right armpit, gently place your right hand on the back of your head and rest it there. Do not pull on your head.

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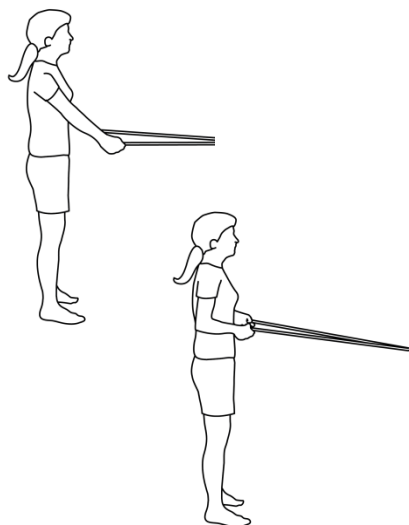
## Exercise Band Exercises for Arms and Legs

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**Goal:** 5 to 10 repetitions ♦ 1 to 2 sets at a time ♦ 3 times a week

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### 1. Arm Pull



#### How:

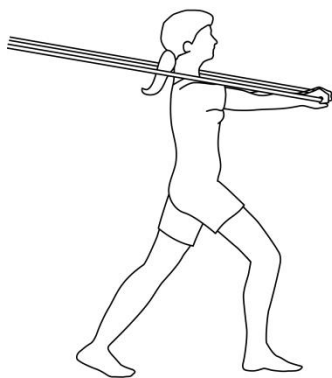
1. Secure the exercise band around a post or in a door jam.
2. Hold the band with each hand or in one hand.
3. Stand up tall and contract your abdominal muscles.
4. Slowly bring your elbows backwards, keeping them beside your body.
5. Bring your shoulder blades together
6. Relax your arms back to the start position.

#### Notes:

- Keep your shoulders down and relaxed, and away from your head.

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### 2. Arm Push



#### How:

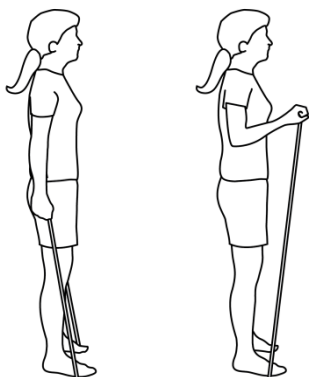
1. Secure the exercise band around a post or in a door jam.
2. Hold the band with each hand or in one hand.
3. Turn around so you are facing away from the post or door jam.
4. Take a step forward with one foot.
5. Stand up tall and contract your abdominal muscles.
6. Start with your elbows at your sides and your arms bent up so your hands are in front of your shoulders.
7. Slowly push your arms forward, and then slowly bring them back.

#### Notes:

- Keep your shoulders down and relaxed, and away from your head.

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### 3. Arm Curl



#### How:

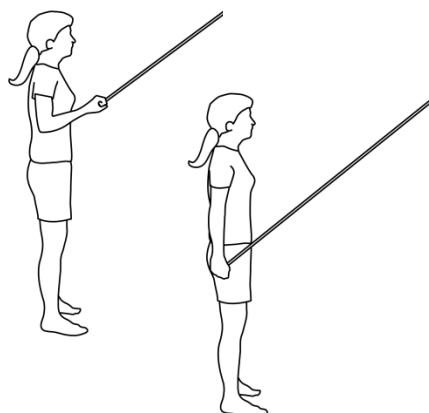
1. Place the band under your feet or loop it around something stable low to the ground.
2. Start with your arms at your sides.
3. Bend your elbows up.

#### Notes:

- Keep your elbows at your sides and your body still. Only your lower arms move.
- Move in a slow, controlled way.
- Keep your shoulders down and relaxed, and away from your head.

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### 4. Arm Extend



#### How:

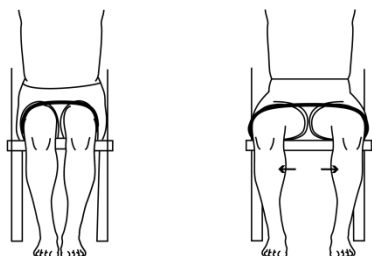
1. Secure the exercise band around a post or in a door jam.
2. Hold the band with each hand or in one hand.
3. Start with your arms at your sides and your elbows bent.
4. Slowly straighten your elbows.

#### Notes:

- Keep your elbows at your sides and your body still. Only your lower arms move.

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### 5. Outer Thigh

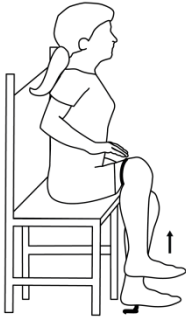


#### How:

1. Sit in a chair.
  2. Loop the band around your thighs.
  3. Move your knees outward.
  4. Hold for 3 seconds.
  5. Relax.
-

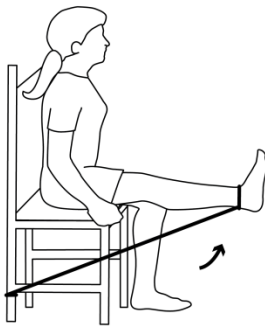


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**6. Knee Lift****How:**

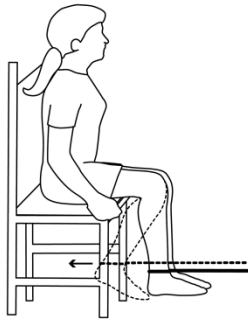
1. Sit in a chair.
2. Loop the band around your right thigh, over your left knee and secure the end of the band under your left foot.
3. Lift the right knee up.
4. Hold for 3 seconds.

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**7. Knee Extend****How:**

1. Tie or secure the band around the back leg of the chair and the other end around your ankle.
2. Sit up in the chair.
3. Straighten the leg
4. Hold for 3 seconds.
5. Gently lower your leg.

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**8. Knee Flex****How:**

1. Tie 1 end of the band to a secure object in front of you and the other end around your ankle.
  2. Bend your knee backwards.
  3. Hold for 3 seconds.
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Upper Body Strengthening													
	Date												
Neck Setting	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Shoulder Blade Squeeze	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Neck Rotation	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Upper Body Stretching													
Forward Bend Stretch	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Side Bend Stretch	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Bend/Rotate Stretch	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Head to Armpit Stretch	Repetitions												
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Arm Push	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Arm Curl	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Arm Extend	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Outer Thigh	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Knee Lift	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Knee Extend	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												
Knee Flex	Repetitions												
	Times/Day												

## Community Activity Resources

### Yoga

- Examples of gentle styles of yoga: Restorative, Therapeutic, Flow, Hatha
- Purchase DVDs or try on-line classes. See [www.gaia.com](http://www.gaia.com) or [www.yogo.tv](http://www.yogo.tv).
- Attend yoga studios or through community recreation centres.  
Search [www.yogadirectorycanada.com](http://www.yogadirectorycanada.com) for a teacher/studio
- Canadian Institute for the Relief of Pain and Disability: Yoga for People in Pain  
Webinar [www.cirpd.org/resources/Webinars/](http://www.cirpd.org/resources/Webinars/)

### Tai Chi

- All around B.C. through Taoist Tai Chi organization: [www.taoist.org/bc](http://www.taoist.org/bc)
- You pay a small membership fee, which can be pro-rated based on income  
Gives you access to any class in B.C.
- Different levels: Beginner, Continuing, and Health Recovery

### Arthritis

- The Arthritis Society runs *JointWorks* and *WaterWorks* across the province, usually out of community recreation centres/pools
- Some community pools may call this *Gentle Joints*
- Links: The Arthritis Society [www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca) or  
The Arthritis Resource Guide of BC [www.argbc.ca](http://www.argbc.ca)

### Walking Groups

- *Hearts in Motion* walking clubs through Heart and Stroke Foundation:  
[www.heartandstroke.bc.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.bc.ca)
- *Walk Fitness* walking program from the Running Room [www.runningroom.com](http://www.runningroom.com)

### Seniors

- *Get up and Go!* Entry Level exercise program through Fraser Health  
[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

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[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Catalogue #265567 (July 2017)

To order: [patienteduc@fraserhealth.ca](mailto:patienteduc@fraserhealth.ca)

