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7 ESSENTIAL MOVES TO IMPROVE YOUR STRENGTH & AGILITY

...As You Age

by Certified Personal Trainer;
Joy Fletcher
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- **Certified personal trainer,** *Joy Fletcher*, developed this guide because of a disturbing trend she noticed in adults 50 years old & older.
- **Maybe this is your story as well.** You want to improve your strength and fitness but you're afraid you'll get injured. Or you keep getting injured even when you try different fitness programs and different trainers.
- **You're frustrated and losing confidence.** You're so afraid of getting hurt you feel like there are no good options for improving your health and fitness.
- **There is a solution.** In this guide, Joy gives you all the information you'll need to master the basic fundamental movements to build the overall muscle strength needed to prevent injuries or re-injury. These are the same proven techniques she uses every day in her group classes and personal training sessions.
- **It's NEVER Too Late!** Now is the time to stop letting fear, injuries, and pain keep you from living a full and active life. Start incorporating these 7 Essential Moves so you can stay independent and enjoy the active lifestyle you see yourself living.

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If you find yourself at the milestone of 50 years or older, you probably noticed your regular daily activities are taking a little more effort. For instance:

- Cleaning the house takes longer;
- Changing bed sheets seems to require Herculean strength;
- Using the step stool is way less desirable; and
- Energy levels are gone before the end of the day.

So what's going on? Well, for women, part of this is due to changes in body chemistry. As we age, estrogen levels decline, and the body becomes more susceptible to losing muscle and strength – especially if regular strength and muscle-building activities haven't been part of daily life.

"Frailty, commonly associated with aging includes; low physical activity, muscle weakness, slowed performance, fatigue & poor endurance and a lower ability for independent living." - JAMA 11/8/2006

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SCIENCE TO THE RESCUE!

Staying strong and agile can be greatly improved by practicing and including these ***7 Essential Movements*** into your daily active life. The movements are:



1. PUSH
2. PULL
3. HINGE
4. TWIST
5. SQUAT
6. LUNGE
7. WALK

But it's not just the ***7 Essential Movements*** that are important. It's how you practice these movements. The ***secret***, when practicing these movements is, they need to be done while using good ***posture***.

"Good posture not only protects you against back pain, it also improves your overall health and appearance." - Harvard Health

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LET'S TALK ABOUT POSTURE...

One of the most visually noticeable indicators of overall muscle weakness.

Uncorrected Posture causes:

- Changes to center-of-balance, shifting your balance too far forward.
  - This forward shift makes you feel less stable and increases risk of falling.
  - The head and neck shift forward, straining the muscles in those areas.
  - This can cause headaches, jaw, neck, shoulder, upper and lower back pain.
    - Causes the rib cage to restrict the diaphragm and reduces lung capacity.
      - This causes fatigue, lack of energy and decreases your desire to stay active.
      - You move even less, losing even more strength; and the cycle continues

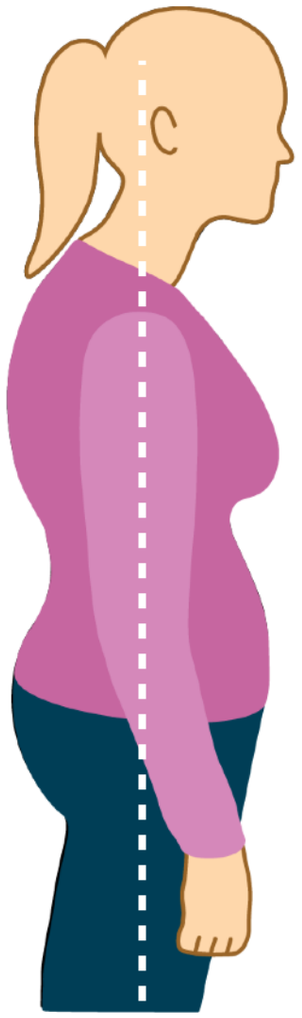
To Correct Posture:

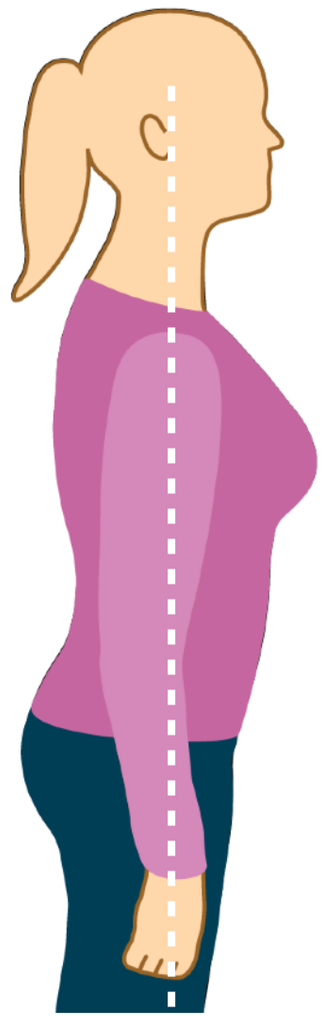
- ***THINK TALL!*** Pull tall in the rib cage (the torso), lifting your chest slightly.
  - This helps slumping shoulders move back into a more neutral position.
  - It also helps activate the front abdominals for additional support.
  - Then, bring head and neck back to sit squarely over shoulders.

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LEFT: Common Posture in inactive adults

RIGHT: Common Posture in an active adult

The Left Posture Stance:

1. Shoulders slumped forward
2. Arms rest too far in front
3. Head/neck shifted too far forward
4. Hips are rotated forward
5. Torso shortened & compressed

The Right Posture Stance:

1. Shoulders are down and neutral
2. Arms rest at the side
3. Head/neck centered over shoulders
4. Hips are level
5. Torso is lifted & supported

HOW TO BEGIN

1. If you're just starting out, please check with your health care provider to make sure you are medically cleared to practice the 7 Essential Movements.*
2. Begin by setting aside 15-20 minutes every other day to practice the Movements.
3. Wear clothing that allows you to move freely without restriction.
4. Start with the first movement, read the descriptive steps carefully.
5. Following the steps, take your time to practice the movements – slowly and with control. Make sure you are using good posture and proper form as described.
6. Try to do each movement at least 4 times (repetitions). **
7. Once you can do each movement 12 times easily, start with movement #1 again and go through each movement a second time for 2 sets of 12 repetitions.

"If exercise was sold in pill form, it would be the number one pill sold throughout the world because the benefits are endless." - Renee Dumont

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SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Before practicing the Movements, start with a WARM-UP by marching-in-place and swinging your arms or dancing to your favorite music. Warm-up at least 2-4 minutes.

WEEK 1:

MONDAY: Warm-up 2-4 minutes
Practice movements 1-6, for 4 reps
Walk - 5-20 minutes

WEDNESDAY: Warm-up 2-4 minutes
Practice movements 1-6, for 4 reps
Walk for 5-20 minutes

FRIDAY: Warm-up 2-4 minutes
Practice movements 1-6, for 4 reps
Walk for 5-20 minutes

***If 4 repetitions per movement does not feel difficult, go to 5 reps the next week.*

WEEK 2:

MONDAY: Warm-up 2-4 minutes
Practice movements 1-6, for 5 reps
Walk for 5-20 minutes

WEDNESDAY: Warm-up 2-4 minutes
Practice movements 1-6, for 5 reps
Walk for 5-20 minutes

FRIDAY: Warm-up 2-4 minutes
Practice movements 1-6, for 5 reps
Walk for 5-20 minutes

***If 5 repetitions per movement does not feel difficult, go to 6 reps the next week, etc.*

** The movements presented here are not meant to replace any current medical treatment. Not all movements may be suitable for everyone. Please check with your doctor before adding or beginning any new activities to avoid or reduce the risk of injury. Perform these movements at your own risk. Agile 4 Life Fitness will not be responsible for any injury sustained as a result of using any of the movements presented in this document.*

7 Essential Movements

1. PUSH

- Mainly involves the muscles in the front of the body:
- Chest muscles (Pectoral)
- Abdominals (Rectus Abdominus)
- Shoulders (Deltoids)
- Front & outer thigh (Quadriceps)
- Back of arms to stabilize (Triceps)

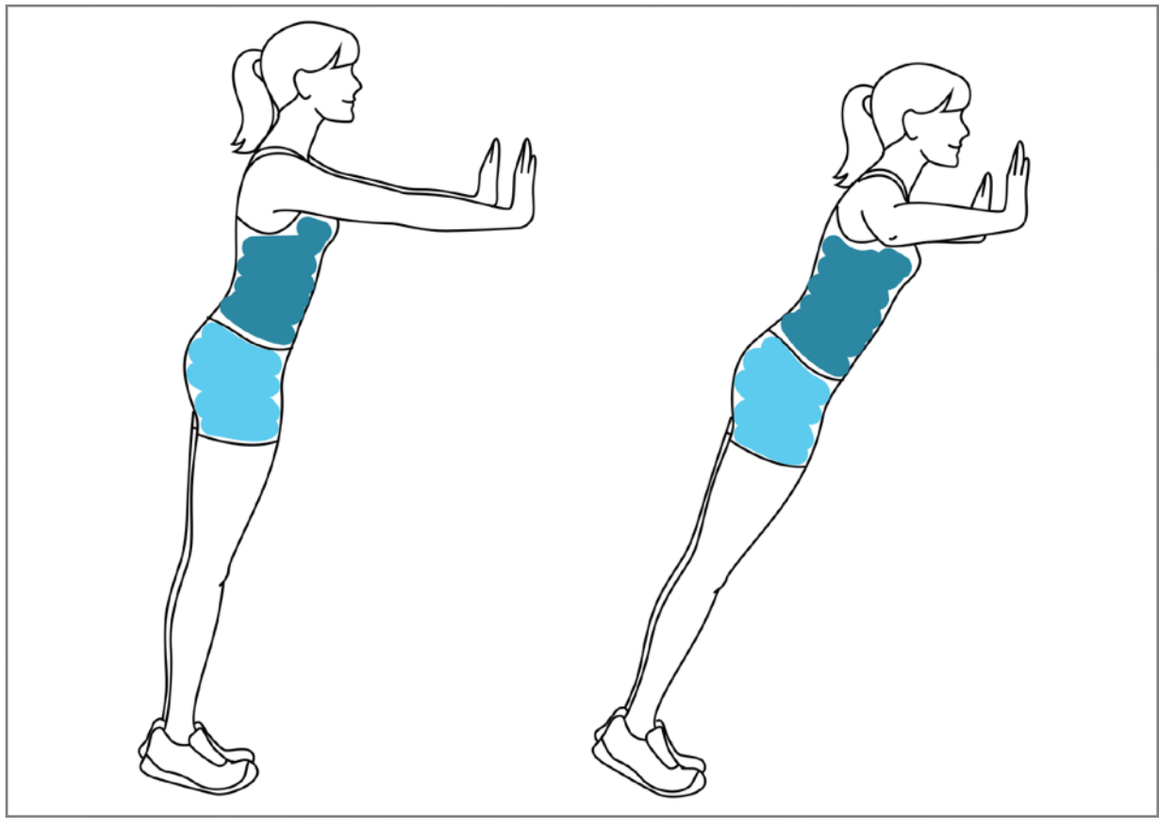
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One of the most common pushing activities used in daily life is done while shopping. No matter the store, you'll probably find yourself at one point pushing around a cart loaded with items.

But pushing is also critical for getting yourself upright after working or playing on the floor or ground.

This is a great movement to keep those pushing muscles strong and keep you more active in your daily life.

WALL PUSHUP OR COUNTER PUSHUPS





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WALL OR COUNTER PUSHUP

CAUTION: For your safety, make sure the object you are pushing against will NOT move. The farther away from the wall or counter the more difficult the movement.

1. Stand, facing a wall or kitchen counter, an arms-length away.
2. For wall: place palms on wall, arms chest width apart & shoulder high. For counter: securely grab the edge of counter, arms chest width apart.
3. Pull tall, keeping torso tight, bend elbows, & slowly lower to the wall or counter, let heels come up.
4. Only lower far enough, so you can push yourself back to start.
5. Repeat 4-12 times (repetitions).

7 Essential Movements

2. PULL

- Mainly involves the muscles in the back of the body:
- Back muscles (Latissimus Dorsi)
- Upper back (Rhomboids)
- Back of shoulders (Rear Deltoids)
- Front of arm to assist (Biceps)
- Butt muscles (Gluteus Maximus)
- Back of legs (Hamstrings)

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Pull is an action with the potential to be used many times in an average day, especially if your day doesn't include too much sitting.

It's used when weeding, lifting grocery bags, lifting a grandchild, pulling wet clothes from a washer, making a bed, pulling items from a shelf or a suitcase from an overhead airplane bin.

Here is a great movement to keep those pulling muscles strong and keep you more active in your daily life.

SEATED TOWEL PULL

OR SEATED BAND PULL



Note: Fold the long side of a large towel so it forms a rope-shape, no wider than 4-inches. Make sure the chair you are using is stable.

This movement can also be done while sitting on the floor. If you have trouble getting up from the floor or have very tight hamstrings, a chair will give you better results.

SEATED TOWEL PULL

1. Sit on a stable chair towards the front of the seat.
2. Extend 1 leg in front with the knee slightly bent.
3. Keep the other leg on the floor with foot flat, to stay stable.
4. Place the towel under the instep of the flexed foot of the extended leg.
5. Hold one end of the towel in each hand.
6. Keep the leg & foot tight, sit tall with good posture & gently pull the towel towards you keeping it in a straight line.
7. Using your back muscles to pull, gently pull & hold for 5 seconds, then rest.
8. Repeat 4-12 times (repetitions).

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SEATED BAND PULL

1. Sit in a chair, towards the front of the seat.
2. Extend both legs in front with the knees slightly bent.
3. Place the band under the instep of both feet & hold one end of the band in each hand.
4. Flex the feet, sit tall with good posture, arms straight in front, shoulders down, & slight tension on the band to start.
5. Then pull elbows straight back while keeping shoulder blades down. Hands should end up in front of the hips on the pull back.
6. Hold the pull for 3 seconds, come back to start.
7. Repeat 4-12 times (repetitions).

Note: If you have done any physical therapy recently you may have a resistance band at home. If you use it for this exercise, please check to make sure the band will not break on use. This exercise is best done in a stable chair.

Bands can be a great addition to a workout. It's very easy to change the resistance, they are easy on the joints, they come in a variety of strengths, are very compact and transportable.

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7 Essential Movements

3. HINGE

- Mainly uses the large muscles in the back of the body as well as around the torso or core:
- Back muscles (Latissimus Dorsi)
- Muscles along the spine (Erector Spinae)
- Muscles in the hips (Hip Flexors)
- Butt muscles (Gluteus Maximus)
- Back of legs (Hamstrings)
- Front muscles (Abdominals)

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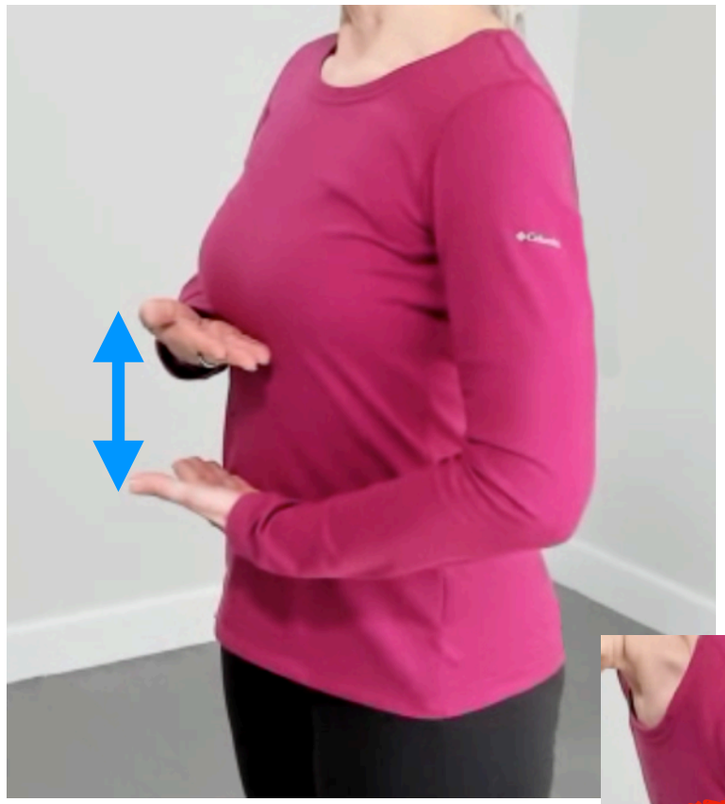
Hinge is one of the most common of all our every day movements. Why? Because it's similar to the movement we use to sit!

The hinge movement involves shifting the body weight back as the hips act as an axis.

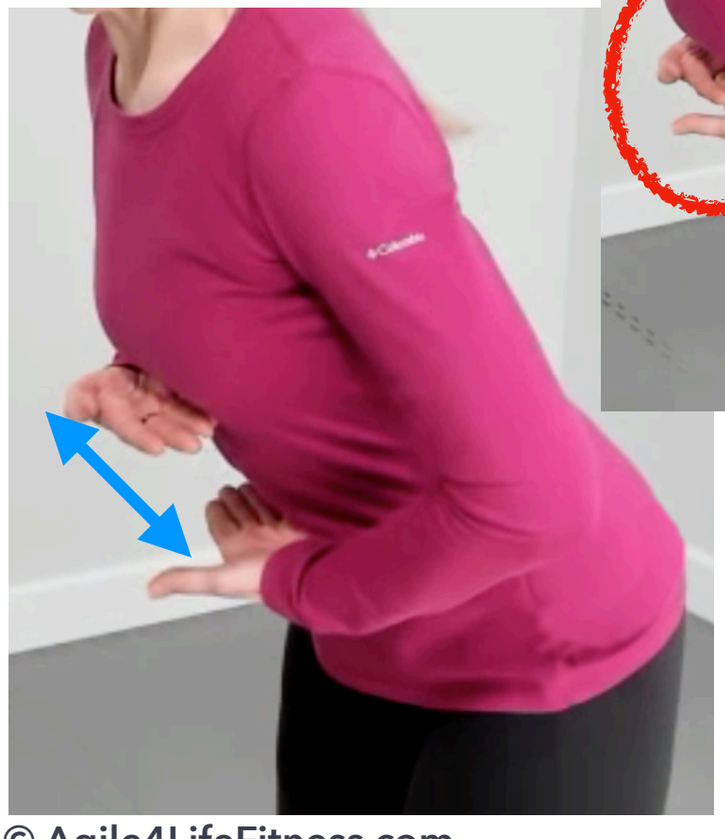
Learning a proper hinge movement can help prevent lower back strain and injuries while helping to strengthen the core muscles.

Hinge is also used to perform other movements, such as a Squat (#5 of the 7 Essential Movements). Here is a very easy method to learn the Hinge.

HOW TO HINGE







HINGE (AT THE HIPS)

Note: This movement is best practiced in a mirror. Go slow to help build core strength.

1. Stand tall with good posture.
2. Place the side of one hand at the band of your bra under the breasts.
3. Place the side of the other hand at your belly button. (see top pic)
4. Bend (Hinge) at the hips, tightening the abdominal muscles in the front & bending the knees slightly.
5. Your hands will NOT touch if you hinge correctly. If the hands touch you are bending at the waist.
6. Hold the hinge for 5 seconds then stand slowly and rest.
7. Repeat 4-12 times (repetitions).

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7 Essential Movements

4. ROTATE

- Mainly involves the muscles along the spine, the back and along the sides of the torso:
- Muscles along the spine (Erector Spinae)
- Upper back muscles (Rhomboids)
- Back muscles (Latissimus Dorsi)
- Sides (Obliques)

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Rotation is a movement used many times in a day and is often used along with other movements, such as pull or hinge.

We rotate when we put things away, like dishes or groceries, getting out of a car, or moving laundry from the washer to the dryer.

The inability to rotate can start to limit activities and thus lead to weak core muscles. Here is a good rotational movement to keep you more agile.

STANDING TORSO TWIST W/ARMS HELD IN FRONT



UPPER TORSO TWIST W/ ARMS HELD IN FRONT

1. Stand tall with feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, and leg muscles tight.
2. Pull tall in the rib cage for posture.
3. Clasp hands together with thumbs pointed up, arms shoulder high with shoulder blades down.
4. Slowly rotate upper torso and arms to the left as far as what feels comfortable for you, keeping hips stable.
5. Come back to the center.
6. Repeat the torso and arm rotation to the right, coming back to center.
7. Rotate to each side 4-12 times (repetitions).

Note: Use only the upper portion of the spine to twist – the center of the back up. This protects the lower back.

As you twist, keep the hips stable, belly button to the front. Feet should stay planted. If your feet come off the floor as you twist, you are using too much hip & lower back instead of upper torso.

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7 Essential Movements

5. SQUAT

- Mainly involves the muscles in the lower body:
- Butt muscles (Gluteus Maximus)
- Back of legs (Hamstrings)
- Front thigh muscles (Quadriceps)
- Calf muscles (Gastrocnemius)
- Hip muscles (Hip Flexors)

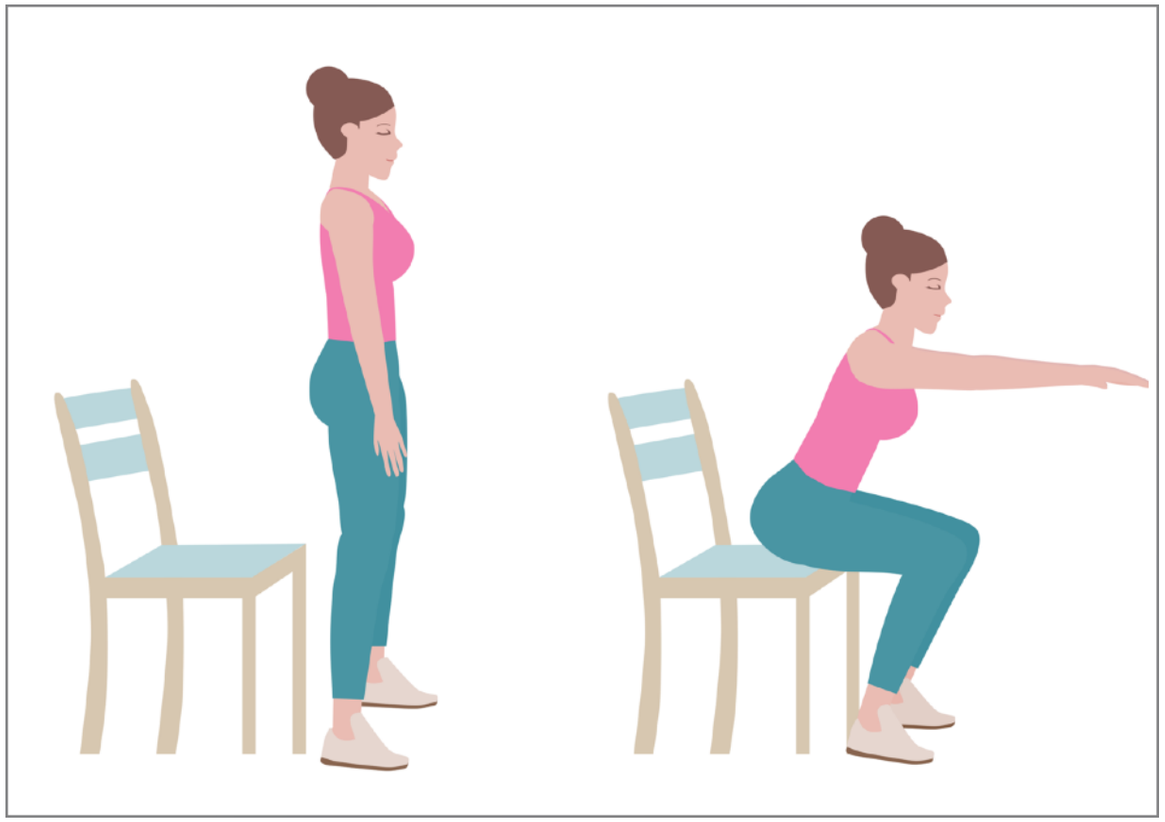
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Squat is the movement recommended when lifting something heavy. The objective is to use your legs to lift, sparing your back. If you lack leg strength, you'll find the squat movement a bit of a challenge.

As mentioned in #3, the hinge movement is used to perform a squat. It's basically a hinge with more knee bend. Hopefully you've been practicing your hinge!

Since a squat movement is used when you sit, practicing this movement is good for making it easier to get up and down out of a chair.

CHAIR SQUAT



CHAIR SQUAT

1. Stand about 6-inches in front of a chair with the seat behind you.
2. Feet should be a bit wider than shoulder width apart.
3. Lift arms shoulder high with shoulder blades down.
4. Pull tall in the rib cage & slowly hinge at the hips as you bend the knees slightly, tightening the muscles in the upper legs (thigh).
5. Lower until the butt touches the chair seat or as low as what feels comfortable for you.
6. Pushing with the thigh muscles, bring yourself back to straight
7. Repeat 4-12 times (repetitions).

Note: It's advisable to practice your hinge movement a few times before trying the squat. The object is to keep tall as you sit. Arms in front will help with balance. Please use a stable chair that's not too low if you are just beginning. Transition to a lower chair as you get stronger!

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7 Essential Movements

6. LUNGE

- Mainly involves the muscles in the lower body:
- Front thigh muscles (Quadriceps)
- Back of legs (Hamstrings)
- Butt muscles (Gluteus Maximus)
- Calf muscles (Gastrocnemius)
- Hip muscles (Hip Flexors)

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If you have ever been out walking, hiking, or gardening and bent down on one knee to tie your shoe than you used a lunge movement.

There are a number of different types of lunges. The lunge movement not only strengthens leg muscles but also works on improving balance.

Mastering a beginning lunge movement will help improve mobility and keep you more active in your daily life.

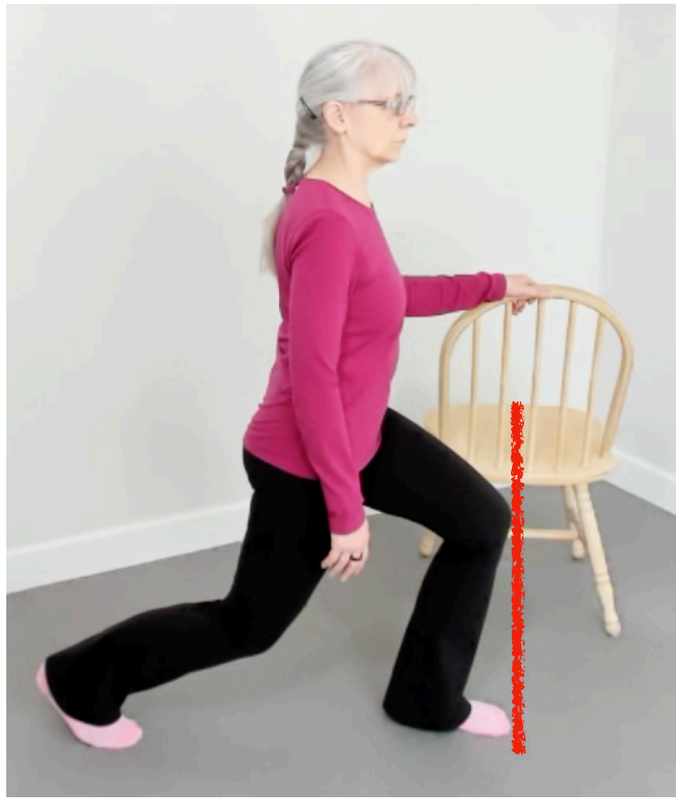
STATIONARY LUNGE



STATIONARY LUNGE

Note: If you do not feel stable, please hold on to something solid for balance that will not move.

1. Stand tall with feet a bit wider than shoulder width apart.
2. Take a step back with 1 foot, staying on the ball of your foot, heel off the floor, & keeping your torso upright so as not to lean forward.



3. Lower the back knee toward the floor, while bending the front knee & staying upright.
4. Only bend your knees & lower yourself to what feels good for you, making sure the front knee does not go past the front toe. (see pic)
5. Press up to straight with the thigh muscles of your legs.
6. Repeat 4-12 times (repetitions).

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7 Essential Movements

7. WALK

- Mainly involves the big muscles of the whole body:
- Back muscles (Latissimus Dorsi)
- Front muscles (Abdominals)
- Front thigh muscles (Quadriceps)
- Back of legs (Hamstrings)
- Butt muscles (Gluteus Maximus)
- Hip muscles (Hip Flexors)
- Calf muscles (Gastrocnemius)

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Walking is a basic movement that just doesn't get much of our attention. If we can walk, we take it for granted and believe we will always be able to walk.

But as we age, muscle weakness in our legs and torso, poor postural positioning, aches and pains, or losing the ability to balance can change our ability to continue walking.

A purposeful walk is the prefect time to practice posture, and keep muscles strong so you can stay more active in your daily life.

HOW TO USE WALKING TO STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE



Note: Using a set of Urban Walking Poles can make your walking program more productive. The Urban Poles, with their specially designed ergonomic handles, help with stability, improve core strength, and allow for a more neutral posture position. Our members love them!

Disclosure: Agile 4 Life Fitness does not receive any commission for sales of the poles or other products sold by Urban Poling. The product recommendation is based strictly on quality for the price and the positive results our members have achieved using these poles.

WALK

1. Before starting a regular walking program, make sure your shoes are not showing uneven wear. Old worn out shoes can cause too much stress on ankles, hips, knees or back.
2. A good pair of snug fitting socks can give additional comfort and prevent blisters.
3. Wear comfortable clothing in layers to moderate body temperature.
4. Warm-up before walking, or walk at a slower pace for the first 2-4 minutes as a warm-up.
5. Pull tall in the torso while walking, with shoulders blades down and neck in a neutral position, centered over shoulders.

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REAL PEOPLE, REAL PAIN, AMAZING RESULTS

"Just got back from a 40 minute walk… No pain at all and after 2 knee replacements this past year – all I can say is Boo Yah!"

Gloria Burt., Berkeley, CA
Age 70

"… these workouts in the past year have helped me regain strength and flexibility in injured areas and to build strength and improve range of motion throughout my body."

Moorea B., San Francisco, CA Age 40

"…I had specific objectives: fix my nagging lower back pain, correct my posture and form during training. In 8 weeks…no more back pain – and it's been decades-nagging back pain."

Holly B., Berkeley, CA
Former Pro Athlete Age 62

"I have minor arthritis in my knees… frequent pain and swelling…also would be injured from minor activities. I was just realizing this week that I haven't had ANY issues or pain in my knees over the last year!"

Diane R., Berkeley, CA
Age 63

"An ACL tear in 2000, medial meniscus surgery in 1990, …my knee is unstable and has severe osteoarthritis. Even with my continual rehab I was told I would not get much improvement. In this past year of perfecting the basics, I have noticed a 60% improvement in strength, stability and range of motion. Plus, I'm in better fitness shape than I've been in the past 20 yrs."

Janice S., Berkeley, CA Age 73

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Agile 4 Life Fitness is built on a simple belief: *Aging does not mean giving up strength, confidence, or independence.*

As fitness facilities shut down across the country in early 2020, I was at a personal crossroads of my own. After decades of working in health and fitness, I had recently relocated and was considering retirement.

But when the pandemic hit, I couldn't ignore those whom I had spent years helping. They needed guidance and engagement more than ever.

So I adapted, and within weeks, I redesigned my training to teach live, interactive classes online.

What emerged was a more focused, well-designed program that was even better at managing pain, improving balance, and strength. An intentional approach to strength training designed specifically for older adults.

My approach is grounded in four principles:

1. Posture and alignment come first – because strength without good mechanics can lead to pain and/or injury.
2. Clear, precise instruction – no guessing and no copying blindly.
3. Education with movement – understanding what's working and why it matters.
4. Real-life relevance – every exercise and workout is meant to help make daily activities easier.

And the results have been undeniable.

Our Agile 4 Life community, with an average age of 70+, benefits from having less pain, improved joint stability, better balance, stronger posture, increased confidence, and greater ease in daily movement.

This is not accomplished with extreme workouts or quick fixes. It's about building usable, functional strength – one smart movement at a time – so you can keep doing the things that you enjoy.

If you're looking for a thoughtful, supportive, and results-driven approach to aging well, I'd love to help. Contact me at:

info@Agile4LifeFitness.com

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