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SPORTS
CENTRE

ESSENTIAL HOME WORKOUT TIPS AND EXERCISES

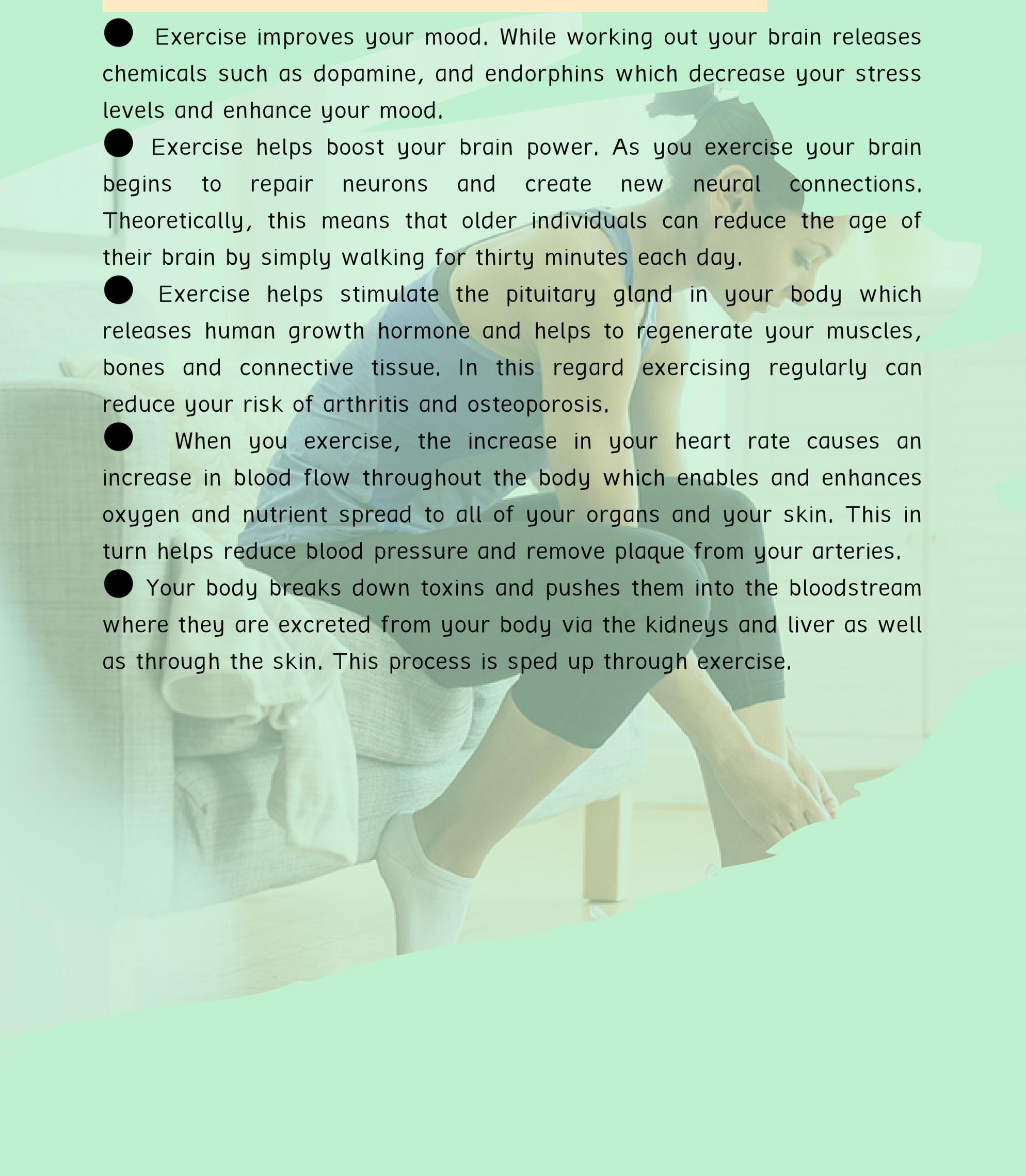


HOME WORKOUT PRINCIPLES

Exercise is highly underrated and underappreciated by many. Just thirty minutes of exercise; in one bout or accumulated throughout the day; can lead to numerous health benefits, no matter your age or fitness levels.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

- Exercise improves your mood. While working out your brain releases chemicals such as dopamine, and endorphins which decrease your stress levels and enhance your mood.
- Exercise helps boost your brain power. As you exercise your brain begins to repair neurons and create new neural connections. Theoretically, this means that older individuals can reduce the age of their brain by simply walking for thirty minutes each day.
- Exercise helps stimulate the pituitary gland in your body which releases human growth hormone and helps to regenerate your muscles, bones and connective tissue. In this regard exercising regularly can reduce your risk of arthritis and osteoporosis.
- When you exercise, the increase in your heart rate causes an increase in blood flow throughout the body which enables and enhances oxygen and nutrient spread to all of your organs and your skin. This in turn helps reduce blood pressure and remove plaque from your arteries.
- Your body breaks down toxins and pushes them into the bloodstream where they are excreted from your body via the kidneys and liver as well as through the skin. This process is sped up through exercise.



IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH...

In fact it only takes about 75 minutes of vigorous high intensity exercise or 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week. By exercising for just thirty minutes a day your sleep quality can also greatly improve. Have a look at some of our infographics on our sports centre webpage for more sleep information and sleep tips.

There are of course many forms of exercise but the four most common exercise categories are:

1. Endurance
2. Flexibility
3. Strength
4. Balance

Each of the exercise types serve a different purpose and can be utilised to target certain areas and systems of your body. You can exercise the same area regularly or you can rotate with workouts of varying intensity and types targeting different body systems throughout the week.

It's best to mix these up and try to incorporate as many varying forms of exercise as you can comfortably manage throughout your workouts.

01

ENDURANCE

Endurance refers to aerobic exercises that increase your heart rate and breathing. This exercise type keeps your heart and your lungs healthy and works to improve your overall fitness. Endurance exercises can help to prevent diseases such as heart disease or diabetes. By building endurance you can more easily carry out your everyday tasks. Some examples of endurance exercises include:

- Climbing hills or stairs
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Physical labour/ manual work
- Biking
- Jogging
- Playing basketball
- Playing tennis

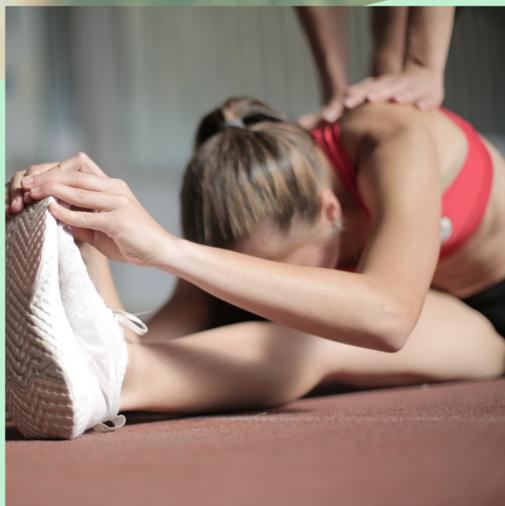


02

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is the range of movement about a joint. Flexibility exercises help to keep your body supple, free of aches and pains, and strengthen your muscles. Being more flexible will give you more freedom of movement for everyday activities. Flexibility exercises include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- Stretching your shoulders and upper arms
- Calf stretches
- Yoga
- Pilates

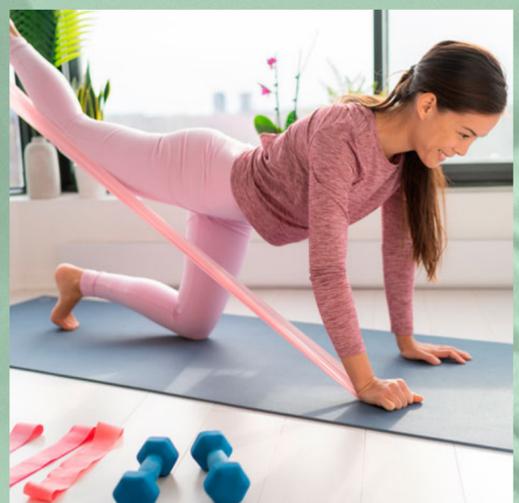


03

STRENGTH

Strength exercises focus on making your muscles stronger. Even a slight increase in your overall strength can make a large difference in your ability to complete everyday tasks such as climbing stairs or carrying grocery bags. These exercises are often referred to as resistance training or strength training. They include:

- Using resistance bands
- Lifting weights
- Body weight exercises





Balance exercises help to prevent falling which can be a common problem for older adults. There are lower body exercises, incorporating strength training, which will help to improve your balance such as:

- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Walking heel-to-toe
- Standing on one foot

When you work out at home balance exercises can be a great choice for your workout. Many of these exercises require little to no equipment, take up minimal room, and can be performed adequately without much instruction or difficulty.

There are many online resources for Yoga and Pilates, both of which can greatly improve your balance whilst also benefitting your flexibility and strength. These exercises can then be advanced using simple and inexpensive equipment pieces such as yoga blocks, small weights, or exercise bands to increase the difficulty and intensity of your home workout.

WARM UP

Endurance training, or cardio, should be a regular part of your training. For a lot of people starting out with at-home workouts this will likely take the form of your warm up. Your muscles need to warm up and cool down before and after any work out, even if you are just going for a brisk climb up a hill outside.

If you are a regular exerciser and are just looking to add to your at-home workouts, the warm up before the main portion of your workout is very important. You need to increase your body and muscle temperature and follow with a light stretch. Taking these 5 minutes to warm up your muscles can help prevent them from shock or strain.

A lot of people take up running as their main source of cardio. Some common injuries sustained through this include shin splints and knee problems, which can manifest very quickly. These injuries often happen because the biggest muscles used, the thighs, glutes and hamstrings, are not properly warmed up before running, and when the big muscles can't bear the load of your exercise, the smaller muscles and joints tend to take the brunt of the burden. These smaller muscles and joints are not designed to do this (the larger muscles are!) causing injuries to happen.

So save yourself potential strain by warming up via some brief cardio, such as a brisk walk on the spot, a light 2 minutes of skipping rope, or a few jumping jacks before you get started.



PRE-EXERCISE STRETCH?

A common mistake when working out at home (and in gym settings) is stretching immediately upon arrival. Stretching by itself is not supposed to be your warm up. Your muscles are not warm yet so enough blood isn't flowing through them making them more likely to resist when you try to stretch them.

What you can do instead is your quick cardio; as mentioned above; just a few minutes to get the blood flowing, and then follow with a light stretch. Alternatively you can save your stretching for the cool down phase at the end of your workout.

COOL-DOWN

Just as important as the warm up is your cool down period. This helps to eliminate soreness, cramps and tiredness later that day, and the following days! The cool down doesn't have to be a huge thing. A good rule of thumb is to align it with your workout intensity, that is the harder you've worked out the longer your cool down should be. During the cool down you simply try to slow down the blood flow to your muscles, reduce your body temperature, and return your body to a pre exercise state.

During a workout your muscles start to shorten due to constant contractions and they may feel tight. Stretching helps to lengthen them back to their regular position which is why stretching during the cool down can help reduce the amount of aches and pains you have the following day.



TIPS TO EXERCISE AT HOME SAFELY

When you exercise at home chances are you won't have a personal trainer or fitness instructor to help you out. You will also be mostly self-reliant in that you might have to figure out how to safely perform an exercise, pose or stretch based on online videos, articles or images.

When starting home exercising it's important that you begin slowly. Too often people are so anxious to get started or excited about a new fitness plan they take on too much too fast. This more often than not results in injuries.

Exercising at home safely requires:

- **The right accessories...**make sure you have proper running shoes and loose, comfortable clothing, particularly if you are planning to add a lot of cardio to your workout.



- **Knowing your equipment...**if you are purchasing weights, exercise bands, or any equipment to help you work out at home, it's important to know how they work and how to use them safely. If you purchase a kettlebell for example, make sure it is a weight you can handle for whatever exercises you plan to use. You can, for example, use a kettlebell to do a goblet squat or an overhead press, but chances are you won't be needing the same weight for each of these exercises. If something doesn't feel right and you can't keep your form, don't push it. Work with a smaller weight. If you are doing strength training with weights it can be helpful to have someone there to spot you or set up safety measures in case you need to drop the weight in the middle of a set without hurting yourself.



● **Changing your eating habits...**as you prepare to safely exercise at home; using the right equipment and the right instructions; your body is going to burn more energy and therefore require additional calories and, specifically, additional protein.

For more information, check out the 'Nutrition' section of our webpage.



START SLOWLY

We've mentioned this already but it bears repeating; start slowly! Working out at home will quickly become second nature and as long as you start slowly and safely you will reap the rewards.

Remember, exercising at home is easy if you stick to the 4 main exercise categories mentioned previously. However you choose to exercise it is important to learn how to safely use any exercise equipment you have or are thinking about purchasing and implement a proper and effective warm up and cool down pre and post your workout.



QUICK STRENGTH WORKOUTS TO DO AT HOME

Body weight exercises are excellent. For optimal strength results, or to progress your training, you can try using some form of weights. Even a set of light dumbbells or a few kettlebells will give you everything you need to begin and progress with strength training.

CHEST PRESS

Working the chest is a great way to improve your overall strength, and if you have weights and a bench at home, the chest press is a great option for you. If you don't have a bench, but you have weights (or kettlebells), you can lie flat on the floor with your knees bent and your feet flat on the ground. With a weight in each hand and your elbows wide and bent, reach both arms upward until your arms are straight, then slowly lower them back down to the start position. Take a deep breath in as you lower the weights, then exhale as you repeat the upward action.

If you don't have weights, you can easily make do with things around your house such as yoga blocks, heavy cans, large books, or filled water bottles. Whatever you choose to use should be of equal weight and something you can safely and comfortably hold.





TRICEP DIPS

Tricep dips are an excellent and effective exercise for toning your arms; specifically your triceps at the back of the arms; and shoulders.

This exercise can be performed using any chair, sofa, bench, or the edge of a bed. Simply sit on the edge of the seat with your hands holding the front edge, then shuffle forwards off the seat supporting your body weight with your arms. From here, simply bend your elbows to lower your body downwards towards the floor. Aim to bring your backside as close to the floor as you can, then push back up to the starting position by straightening your arms again.

To keep this exercise less difficult, maintain a bend in your knees throughout. Alternatively, to increase the difficulty, straighten your knees to keep your heels as far forwards as you can. The lower you can drop towards the floor the more difficult the exercise will also become.

Aim for 8–12 repetitions to begin, then gradually increase the number of repetitions and/or rounds as you advance.

PLANK POSE

The plank pose is an exercise that improves your core muscles and can easily fall under the category of a total body workout. It's an exercise that is easy to learn but can be difficult to master. The more you build with this particular pose, the more overall strength you will gain.

When you develop a strong plank technique, ie. you can comfortably hold the position for 30 seconds, ask one of our staff members for some variations on this exercise to increase difficulty and develop the exercise, and your core strength, further.



QUICK FLEXIBILITY WORKOUTS TO DO AT HOME

Flexibility workouts take many forms and can be as simple as a dedicated stretching routine where you stretch out your legs muscles daily, an early morning total body loosen up, or a more specific yoga or Pilates routine.

QUICK ENDURANCE WORKOUTS TO DO AT HOME

When working out at home there are a few simple cardio workouts you can integrate into your routine, even if you only have a few minutes at a time spread across an entire day.

SKIPPING ROPE

This one brings us back to our youth! Skipping rope is one of the best cardiovascular exercises you can do. There are so few cardiovascular exercises that involve the entire body but this is one of the closest you will get. You don't have to jump very high, you just need to jump high enough that the rope can go underneath your feet. Skipping ropes can be relatively inexpensive too, therefore offering a super value-for-money workout!

A few workout ideas could be to skip as quickly as you can for one minute. Rest. Then repeat 5 times.

This will take no more than 10 minutes but should leave you tired, yet energised, and feeling great.



JUMPING JACKS

Jumping jacks, like skipping, can be done anywhere and don't require much space. Much the same as skipping, you can do jumping jacks for one minute at a time, rest for one minute, then repeat. A good goal to set is to increase the amount you can complete in one minute or increase the number of rounds you can complete over time.

QUICK BALANCE WORKOUTS TO DO AT HOME

SQUATS

Squats are one of the best exercises for your legs, and since your legs comprise some of the largest muscles in your body, exercising your legs at home is one of the fastest ways to burn the highest number of calories. Squats as a technique are relatively easy as they imitate an everyday movement we perform in getting in and out of a chair.

To perform, stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your arms at your side, keeping your chest up and your neck in a neutral position looking forwards. Bend your knees and push your hips backwards, just as you would if you were going to sit down in a chair. Keep lowering until your thighs are parallel with the floor, pause momentarily before standing back up. If you're still unsure how to do this, or are unsteady to begin with, practice with an actual chair behind you where you squat down until you touch the chair, then stand back up.

The great thing about the squat is that, as with the plank, you can use multiple variations to get the most out of this simple exercise. As an example, mix them with your jumping-jacks. When you jump into the jumping-jack, instead of coming down to finish in a neutral standing position, continue down into a squat and then from the squat jump back up into your jumping-jack. By combining the two exercises you've create a more difficult exercise combination.

Similarly, you can perform squat jumps, where at the top of the squat movement you perform a jump upwards and then upon landing descend into your lowering phase again. This is a simple but effective way of progressing the squat movement, as you will notice after performing a few rounds of these!

As with most exercises there are usually ways to progress them or make them more easy. Please don't hesitate to contact us at sportscentre@lyit.ie or call over to one of staff members at any time.

LUNGES

Dumbbell lunges are a multi-muscle leg exercise working on all four exercise components; endurance, flexibility, strength and balance. To perform this exercise, hold a dumbbell, kettlebell, or makeshift weight (optional), in each of your hands and stand tall keeping your shoulders back. Keep your chest up and continue to look straight ahead whilst stepping your right leg forward. You should aim to step far enough forwards that your left leg can bend and form a right angle and your right knee ends up straight above your right ankle. Lower your left knee until it is just above the ground then pause here for a moment. Pushing off the floor with your right foot, return to the standing position. Repeat this with the other leg and repeat this sequence for 8–12 repetitions on each leg. During this exercise it is important to pay attention to your posture by concentrating on keeping your upper body 'tall' throughout the movement. Keeping your chin up and looking straight ahead is a good tip to achieve this.



CONTINUE BUILDING

As with any exercise routine, it's always best to start with an easier version of any exercise and progress from there. It's easier to increase a difficulty level; via some of the exercise adjustments mentioned above and/or by adding a resistance such as a weight or kettlebell; than to begin too difficult and cause injury or become demotivated to continue exercising.

If you are using weights, building simply means adding more repetitions, more weight, more rounds, or a combination of any or all of these.

Finally, be sure to give yourself a rest day in between workouts, you've earned it! These days can be as important as your workout days as your body will need time repair muscle and recover from each workout. You may need longer to recover between sessions at the beginning but this is normal and as your body continues to get used to your workouts these recovery times should shorten.



**For any question
please contact us at
sportscentre@lyit.ie**