

A woman with short white hair and glasses is shown in profile, drinking from a silver water bottle. She is wearing a bright blue zip-up jacket. The background is dark and out of focus. In the top right corner, there is a white circular logo with the text "Rethink Mental Illness." In the bottom center, there is a large red circle containing the text "Physical Activity Pack".

Rethink
Mental
Illness.

**Physical
Activity Pack**



Introduction

Welcome to the Rethink Physical Activity Pack. We have pooled some existing resources from partners alongside some new resources with the aim of helping you to consider building physical activity into your daily routine. If you have any questions or queries regarding physical activity feel free to contact Mel Islin our physical activity programme manager.

What is physical activity?

Physical activity is defined by the World Health Organisation as “any bodily movement that requires energy expenditure”. In short, this means any activity that involves movement that uses energy, burns calories and raises your heart rate.

In modern life, we can find ourselves sitting down a lot more often than not. On average this can mean around 9 hours per day sat down. It can be difficult to break this cycle but taking small steps to increase our activity can really help improve our overall health and wellbeing.

Being physically active doesn't have to mean lifting weights or running on a treadmill. It can be as simple as going for a brisk walk, cleaning your home, gardening or mindful activities like Yoga and Tai Chi. Check out the five ways to get moving around the house blog from our [website](#) for more ideas on getting active around the home.' So it makes sense for printed copies too.

Why is it important?

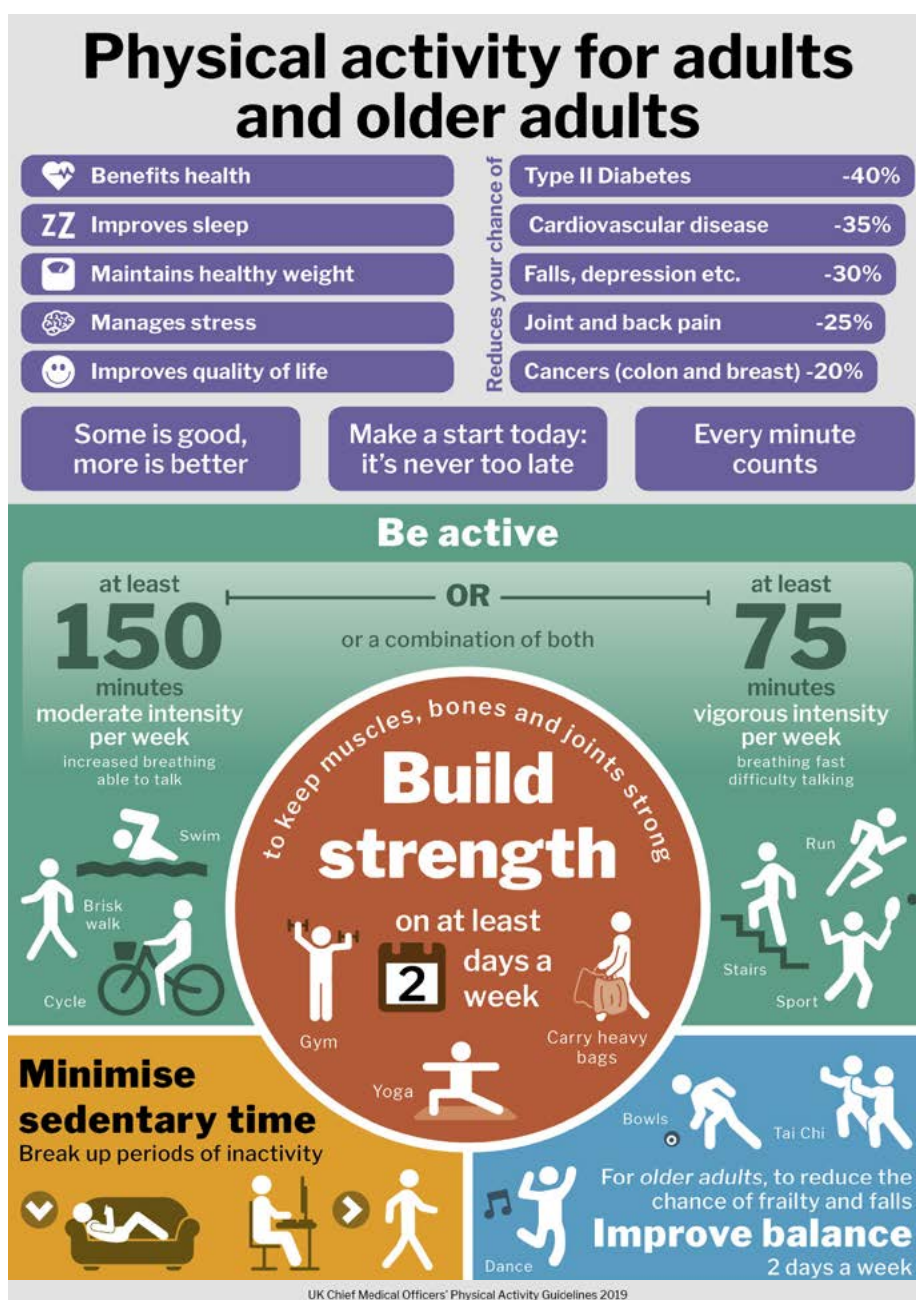
Physical activity can positively impact many areas of our lives that contribute to our overall wellbeing. People who exercise regularly have a lower risk of developing many long-term conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and some cancers.

Recent research has shown that physical activity can contribute to improvements in symptoms for some people living with severe mental illness, including mood, alertness, concentration, sleep patterns and psychotic symptoms. Physical activity can also contribute to improved quality of life through improved social groups, meaningful use of time, purposeful activity and the feelings of empowerment. Building your physical activity levels over time has long term physical benefits, many people living with severe mental illness have told us how it has helped them to manage their mental health conditions.

How do I stay on track?

It's important to note that everyone can struggle to find the motivation to be more active, even though we know how helpful it can be! This booklet will hopefully give you some tips on keeping motivated, setting goals and being kind to yourself on your off days, whilst making the most of your better days. Taking small steps to gradually increase our levels of activity can add up to make a big difference.

Many people aren't sure what good physical activity levels look like. By making small adjustments this can be much easier to achieve than you might think. The Public Health England recommended levels of physical activity are listed below;



What next?

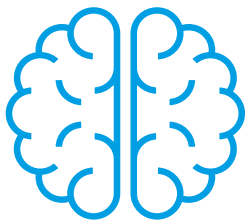
There are lots of different ways we can increase our physical activity, this booklet is designed to help you with some ideas and a few simple steps to help you build activity into your daily routine in the home and around your local area.

Most people are fine to begin gradually increasing their activity levels straight away, you may feel some soreness afterwards or sometimes for the next day or so. During exercise you may become hot or short of breath, this is perfectly normal but if you're not sure, ease off and have a rest. If you have any other long-term conditions or are unsure at all it can be a good idea to speak to your GP for further advice before starting physical activity.

Finally we'd like to thank the We Are Undefeatable campaign, Sport England and our partners at Mental Health UK who supported through their links with My Protein. Thank you all for your support and contributions to this physical activity pack.

Why is it important to be active?

Being regularly physically active has a range of physical, mental, social and economic benefits.

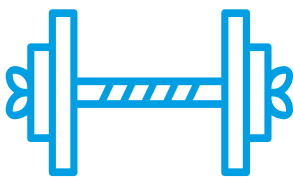


Mental health benefits

Being active can improve mental wellbeing:

- Reduce feelings of depression.
- Increase confidence and self-esteem.
- Improve mood.
- Mitigate side effects of mental health medication.

Physical activity can help increase levels of the “feel good” chemicals, known as endorphins and serotonin. You can’t see this happening but it happens when we are active inside our bodies.



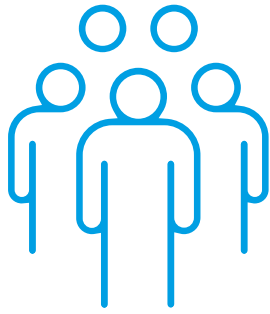
Physical health benefits

Physical activity has lots of physical health benefits:

- Ease side effects of medication, including weight loss, improves sleep and reduces lethargy.
- Increase fitness levels.
- Makes you stronger.

Physical activity also reduces the risk of acquiring a range of physical illnesses and conditions, including:

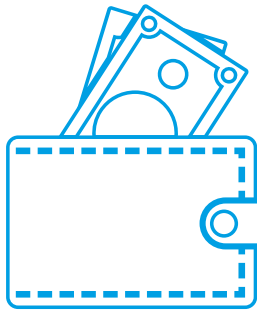
- coronary heart disease
- stroke
- type 2 diabetes
- some cancers



Social benefits

Physical activity can also have a positive social impact:

- Meet new people.
- Reduce social isolation.
- Build community links.
- Increase social cohesion.
- Fun and enjoyment.



Economic benefits

The economy can benefit from physical activity:

- Jobs in the leisure and sports coaching industry.
- Volunteering opportunities.
- Generate income.
- NHS savings.
- Improved health leading to more people able to work.



Individual benefits

Physical activity can benefit individual development:

- Improve confidence to try new activities.
- Improve motivation to set and achieve goals.
- Improve quality of life.
- Increase self-esteem.
- Development of soft skills, e.g. leadership and teamwork.

Available Resources

Moving more at home

15 ways to move more at home

5 in 5 exercise

Resistance band workouts

Home HIIT workouts from My Protein



**DAMN RIGHT
I'M STRETCHING
MYSELF**

MOVING MORE AT HOME

We Are Undefeatable has been developed by 15 health charities, along with National Lottery funding and expertise from Sport England, to support and inspire people with health conditions to be active in a way that works for them.

Our charities bring together people with a wide variety of conditions, such as arthritis, diabetes, dementia, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, cancer, stroke, and lung, heart and mental health conditions.

Being undefeatable is understanding that how you feel can change from day to day, that everyone is different, and moving more when you can is just as important as accepting when you can't.

However you choose to move, it's all good for your health and wellbeing. Being active with others if you can, and doing a little movement every day may help you get started and keep moving.

FINDING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Here are some ideas that could help you move more.

Make the most of your home:

Use everyday objects such as stairs, chairs, or small bottles as weights.

Build movement into your routine:

Break up periods of sitting by doing some stretches while watching TV or get up and walk during the ad breaks.

Have fun getting active:

Make a tea break a 'dance around the kitchen' break while the kettle boils!

Move more with others:

Call a friend while walking round the house or garden, or play active games with family.

Do relaxing activities:

Gentle stretches and taking time to breathe deeply can clear your head.

MY DAILY UNDEFEATABLE

Fill this in as a reminder of what makes you undefeatable.

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO MOVE MORE?
(LIST AS MANY REASONS AS YOU LIKE!)**

**HOW DO YOU LIKE TO GET MOVING?
(WHAT DO YOU ENJOY, OR WANT
TO TRY?)**

**WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?
(THIS WEEK AND THIS MONTH)**

The grid below can help you track how you've been active from day to day.

DAY	HOW DID I MOVE TODAY?	HOW DID I FEEL?	WHAT WILL I DO TOMORROW?
MON			
TUES			
WED			
THURS			
FRI			
SAT			
SUN			

GETTING STARTED

We've put together these tips to help you get started and find ways to get active that work for you.



“
WHEN YOU DO ANYTHING, ANY KIND OF ACTIVITY, YOU FEEL SO MUCH BETTER. IT DOES LIFT YOU

”

JO

FIND ACTIVITIES YOU ENJOY:

You're more likely to keep doing something you enjoy. Try different things until you find the right activity for you.

START SLOWLY AND BUILD UP:

It's good to warm up your body before getting active. When you're moving more, you may feel a bit warmer and breathe heavier. You may have a little muscle or joint soreness afterwards. But if you feel unwell, dizzy, get sharp pains, or your condition worsens, stop and rest. Try something different next time.

MAKE THE MOST OF GOOD DAYS:

Listen to your body and do what feels comfortable. On some days, you may need to do fewer or different activities.

EVERY MOVEMENT COUNTS:

Small amounts throughout the day all add up. Whatever you're able to do, it's all good for your health and wellbeing.

For more resources and ideas about ways you can start moving more, visit [WeAreUndefeatable.co.uk](https://www.WeAreUndefeatable.co.uk)

REBECCA

Rebecca became depressed after a multiple sclerosis (MS) diagnosis, but she discovered wheelchair dancing and fell in love with it.

Rebecca was training as a physiotherapist when she was diagnosed. As her condition progressed, she found it harder to be active and it was impossible to do her job. Taking up dancing helped her manage the depression that came after, and it became one of the activities she loves most.

For Rebecca, there's no better way to get moving than dancing at home. She's able to let loose and have fun with all styles of dance. It's completely changed her life, and she always feels better afterwards.



//
**DANCING HAS
COMPLETELY
CHANGED
MY LIFE**



15 WAYS TO MOVE MORE AT HOME

Here is a range of activity ideas to help you move more at home throughout the day. Start slowly and build up. Try the warm up activities first then find the activities that work best for you and your ability level. To make exercises more challenging, use small weights such as water bottles, lift your knees higher, use your arms and jump or hop.

WARM UP

To **loosen ankles**, sit down and alternate between digging your heel and pointing your toe. To **loosen shoulders**, circle them up to your ears, back and down.



HAVE FUN BEING ACTIVE

While you're **waiting for the kettle** to boil why not put on your favourite music and **dance** like no-one's watching!



Play **active games** such as kicking a ball around the garden, throw and catch games or play skittles using things from around the house.

MOVEMENTS YOU CAN DO SEATED OR STANDING

To **stretch your upper body**, clasp your hands above your head and push upwards, gently bend over to each side to stretch the upper body. You can do this standing or seated.



While you're **watching tv**, get a small bottle of water in each hand as weights. For a **bicep curl**, curl your lower arms up to your shoulder and back down. For a **shoulder press** have your hands at shoulder height, and raise your hands above your head and back down.



Leg or knee raises can be done standing or sitting. For the leg raise, sit on a chair with both feet on the floor and **bring one leg up** until it's level with the floor and then **back down** again.



RELAX WHILE BEING ACTIVE

Gentle stretches are good for relaxation, such as **lying on the floor** and gently **bringing the knees up** to the chest. Or **sitting on a chair**, straighten up your back and **gently twist** round to one side and hold for a few seconds; repeat on the other side.



STAY STRONG

Calf raises can strengthen your legs - hold on to the back of a chair with your feet flat on the ground. **Stand on your tip toes** and hold for a few seconds before lowering your heels back down.



Squats are a good exercise for your whole body. Holding onto a chair, ensure your back is straight and feet are hip width apart and **bend at the knees**, as if you're going to sit down. Then **straighten your legs** to stand up straight again.



Stand up from sitting and back down again keeping your chest up. Do this as many times as you can. If you're feeling comfortable not to use your hands to help you, **hold a small weight** such as a small bag of sugar to your chest for more effort.



Standing at a slight angle **facing a wall**, have your hands shoulder width apart at shoulder height. Breathe in as you bend your elbows and **lower your body** to the wall, then **push back up**.

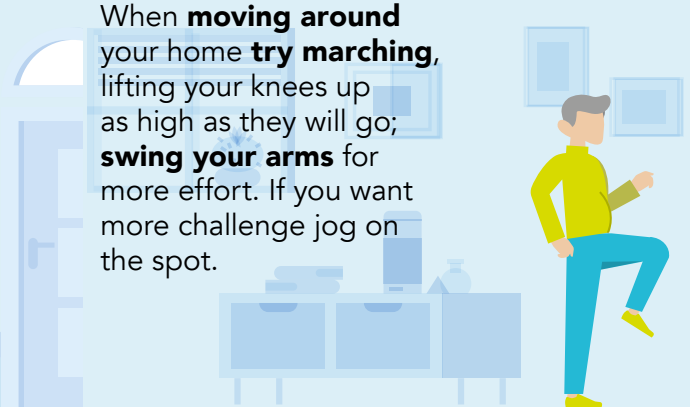


MOVING AROUND YOUR HOME

Walk around your garden or home while calling a friend - a **good chat** is great for your mental wellbeing.



When **moving around** your home **try marching**, lifting your knees up as high as they will go; **swing your arms** for more effort. If you want more challenge jog on the spot.

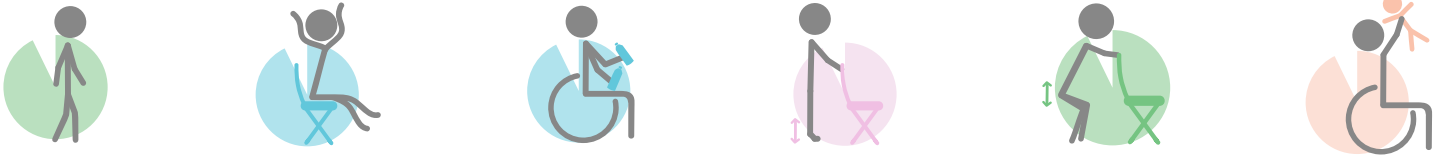


If you've been **sitting for a while** and have steps or stairs at home, try **walking up and down the stairs** or use the bottom stair to step up and down.



If jumping jacks aren't right for you, try **half jacks** instead. **Step to the side** and **raise an arm** at the same time as the stepping leg.





FIVE IN FIVE

Five in Five is a completely customisable mini-workout to help you move in whatever way works for you. Doing Five in Five is simple: choose 5 exercises from the activity library and do each one for 1 minute, adding up to a 5 minute mini-workout.

We've created four different categories, each with a few activities that you pick from to mix and match your favourite combo. Whether you want to improve your strength, unwind and relax, or just have a bit of fun, there's bound to be a Five in Five that suits you.

See some activity options on the following pages, as well as space for you to write in your favourite Five in Five on the last page.

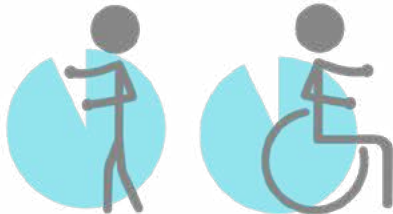
If you're new to being active or are just getting back into it, visit [WeAreUndefeatable.co.uk/getting-started](https://www.weareundefeatable.co.uk/getting-started)



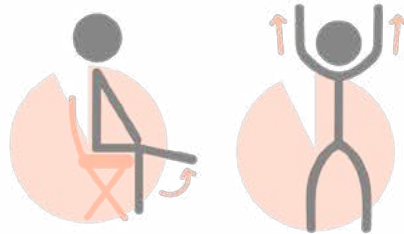
Warming Up

Activities to get your body warmed up that require no equipment

Pull no punches!
While seated or standing,



Time to lift! While seated,
lift up one leg at a time,

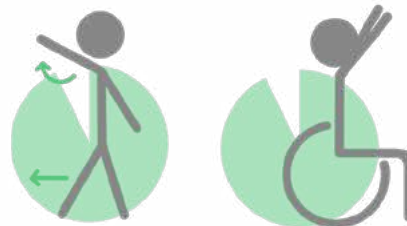
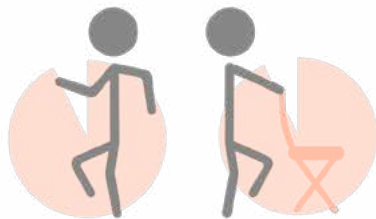


reach your arms out
to hit an imaginary punching bag!

or start with your hands in front of
your shoulders and push up
above your head.

Get that heartbeat up!
Walk on the spot and gradually
increase arm swings and knee lifts
until you're marching.

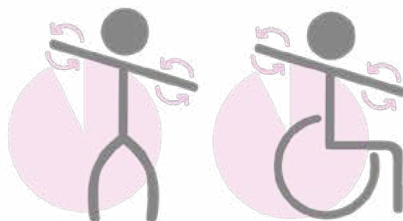
Get going with some half jacks.
Step to the side and lift one arm on
your left side, then your right.



Hold onto a chair
for assistance if you need!

If you're seated, you can do
overhead claps instead!

Let's get rolling.
Roll your shoulders around,
first forwards, then backwards.

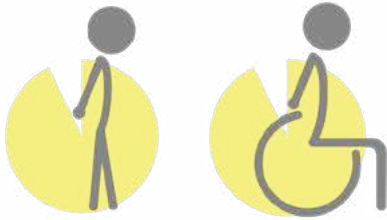


After a little while, raise your
arms for an arm roll, too!

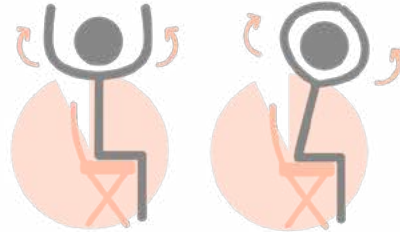
Stress-Busting

Stretching and other activities to unwind

Interlock your hands behind your back and look at the ceiling.



Raise your hands above your head and stretch them from left to right.

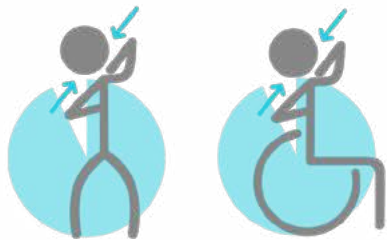


Gently pull your hands towards the floor (only as far as you're comfortable).

Interlink your hands when you do it for a bit more intensity!

Reach behind your shoulders and try to walk your fingers down your back.

Unwind - literally! Twist from the waist, and look back over your shoulder.



Don't worry if they don't touch - try holding on to your shirt instead.

Hold for a few seconds before twisting the other way!

Mood-Boosting

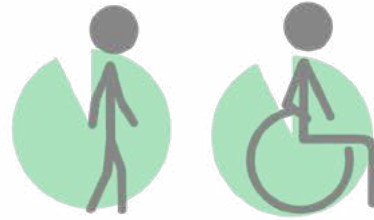
Activities to lift your spirits and clear your head

Dance in place,
any way that you like.



There are no wrong moves!

Move around your surroundings
for a minute, at your own pace.



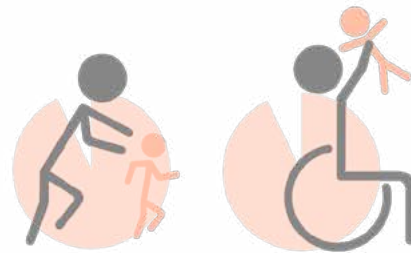
If you've got some outdoor space,
why not move there?

Shake out the tension in your arms -
and if you can, your legs, too.



Now's the time to let loose!

If you're getting active with
a child or grandchild,



it's their turn to
pick which move you do!

Exercises with Accessories

Exercises with equipment or household items

Holding a full water bottle or unopened can, curl your arm up to your shoulder



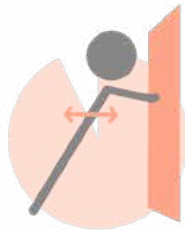
and then bring it back down.
No fancy equipment needed!

Do a few strengthening calf raises by rising up to your tip toes for a few seconds before lowering back down.



Be sure to hold on to the back of a chair for support.

Get the wall involved in your workout by facing it and standing at an angle, hands shoulder width apart at shoulder height.



Bend your elbows to lower your chest to the wall, then push back up.

Try squatting, but with a little support. Hold onto a chair with a straight back and feet hip width apart.



Bend at the knees like you're going to sit, then straighten your legs to stand right back up.

Make your own resistance band!
Pull both ends of a tea towel with your hands.



Bring the towel to your chin and then lift it over your head keeping bent elbows.



FIVE IN FIVE

MY FIVE IN FIVE

1

2

3

4

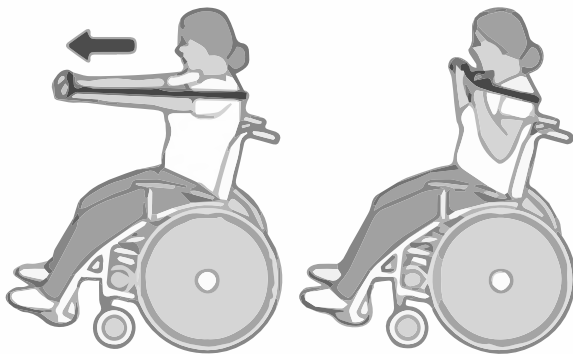
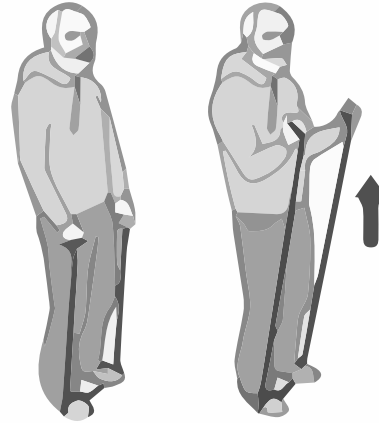
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WE ARE
UNDEFEATABLE

Resistance band exercises

Bicep Curl

Sit or stand, place both your feet on the middle of the resistance band and hold each end of it with your hands. Raise your arms out in front of you to chest height, then return to your starting position and repeat ten times.

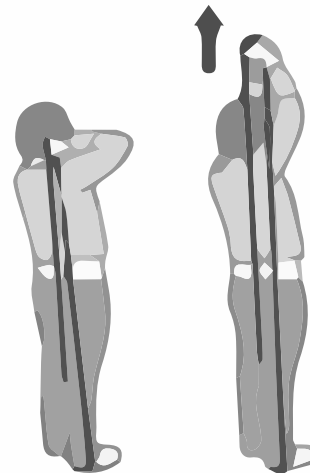


Chest Press

Sit or stand and put the resistance band behind your back and hold each end of it. Stretch both arms out in front of your chest, then return to your starting position and repeat ten times.

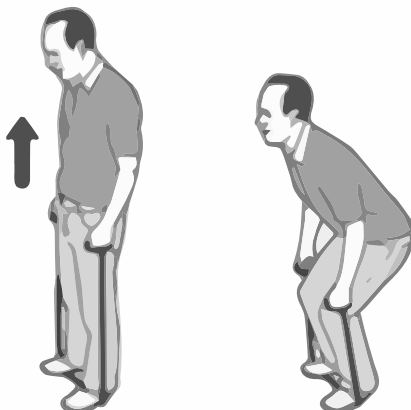
Tricep Press

Stand up and place one end of the resistance band under the heel of one of your feet. Hold the other end of the band with both your hands, stretch the band so it runs behind your body and pull it above your head, then return to your starting position and repeat ten times on each side.



Squats

Place both feet on the middle of the resistance band and hold each end of it with your hands. Slowly bend your knees into a squatting position, then return to your starting position and repeat ten times.

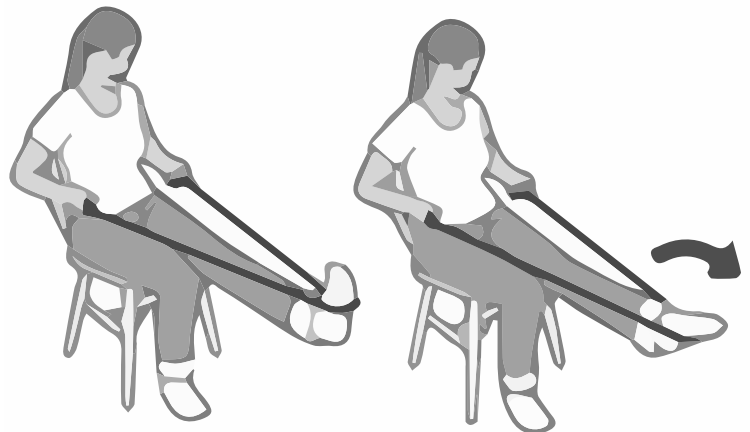


Seated Calf Press

Sit on a chair with your back straight. Place one foot in the middle of the resistance band and hold both ends of it with your hands.

Extend your leg and point your toes towards the ceiling, then point your toes forwards towards the ground.

Return to the starting position and repeat with each leg ten times.



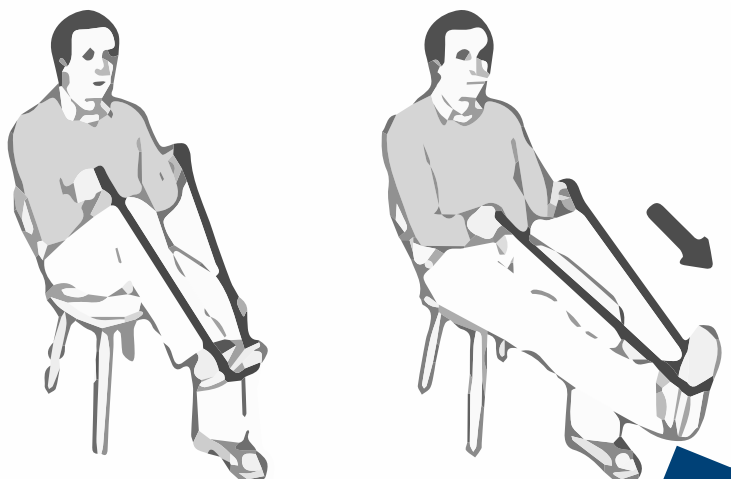
Lateral Raise

Stand up, place both feet on the middle of the resistance band and hold each end of it with your hands.

Raise both arms to the side, until they reach shoulder height, then return to your starting position and repeat ten times.

Leg Press

Sit on a chair with your back straight. Place one foot in the middle of the resistance band and hold both ends of it with your hands. Bend your knee towards you, then straighten it back out in front of you before returning to your starting position and repeating with each leg ten times.





THE HOME HIIT GUIDE

Something more advanced/strenuous for people who want a more intense home workout from MHUK supporters My Protein.

Home HIIT workouts

Workout One

**Complete 5 circuits, resting
between each circuit for 60 seconds**

EXERCISE	SETS	REPETITIONS
Bodyweight squat	5	15
Bodyweight reverse lunge	5	15
Press-up	5	15
Tricep dips	5	15
Jump squats	5	15
Plank hold	5	60s

Home HIIT workouts

Workout Two

**Complete 5 circuits, resting
between each circuit for 60 seconds**

EXERCISE	SETS	REPETITIONS
Walking lunge	5	15
Jump squats	5	15
Step-ups	5	15
Press-up	5	15
30-second standing sprint	5	30s
Ab crunch	5	15

Home HIIT workouts

Workout Three

**Complete 5 circuits, resting
between each circuit for 60 seconds**

EXERCISE	SETS	REPETITIONS
Burpee	5	15
Plank hold	5	60s
Squat into overhead press	5	15
Jump squat	5	15
Bicycle crunch	5	15
Jump twist	5	15

Home HIIT workouts

Workout Four

**Complete 5 circuits, resting
between each circuit for 60 seconds**

EXERCISE	SETS	REPETITIONS
Jump squat	5	15
Burpee	5	15
Press-up	5	15
Tricep dip	5	15
Walking lunge	5	15
30-second standing sprint	5	30s

For more information on physical activity get in with Mel, our Physical Activity Programme Manager at mel.islin@rethink.org

If you're part of a peer support group, service, or community organisation and want to start some group activities, get in touch to ask about our Rethink Activity Toolkit - a co-produced resource to help you build confidence and understanding on how to start facilitating physical activity opportunities.





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www.rethink.org

Leading the way to a better quality of life for everyone severely affected by mental illness.

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