Staying Physically Active during Self-Quarantine

Warning:
This guidance is intended for people in self-quarantine without any symptoms or diagnosis of acute respiratory illness. It should not replace medical guidance in case of any health condition.

As new COVID-19 cases continue to emerge in the WHO European Region, many healthy individuals are being requested to stay at home in self-quarantine. In Malta, fitness centres and other locations where individuals are normally active, will remain temporarily closed. Staying at home for prolonged periods of time can pose a significant challenge for remaining physically active. Sedentary behaviour and low levels of physical activity can have negative effects on the health, well-being and quality of life of individuals. Self-quarantine can also cause additional stress and challenge the mental health of citizens. Physical activity and relaxation techniques can be valuable tools to help you remain calm and continue to protect your health during this time.

WHO recommends adults and older adults carry out 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week, or a combination of both. These recommendations can still be achieved even at home, with no special equipment and with limited space.

The following are some tips on how to stay active and reduce sedentary behaviour while at home in self-quarantine:

**Take short active breaks during the day.** Short bouts of physical activity add up to the weekly recommendations. You may use the suggested exercises below as inspiration to be active every day. Dancing, playing with children, and performing domestic chores such as cleaning and gardening are other means to stay active at home.
Follow an online exercise class. Take advantage of the wealth of online exercise classes. Many of these are free and can be found on YouTube. If you have no experience performing these exercises, be cautious and aware of your own limitations.

Walk. Even in small spaces, walking around or walking on the spot, can help you remain active. If you have a call, stand or walk around your home while you speak, instead of sitting down. If you decide to go outside to walk or exercise, be sure to maintain at least a 2-metre distance from other people.
Stand up. Reduce your sedentary time by standing up whenever possible. Ideally, aim to interrupt sitting and reclining time every 30 minutes. Consider setting up a standing desk by using a high table or stacking a pile of books or other materials, to continue working while standing. During sedentary leisure time, prioritize cognitively stimulating activities, such as reading, board games, and puzzles.

Relax. Meditation and deep breaths can help you remain calm. A few examples of relaxation techniques are available below for inspiration.

This document will provide a selection of exercises, targeting different age groups of the population, which people can choose from, vary on a daily basis and increase repetitions and sets to increase their fitness level.

Examples of home-based exercises for adults
To support individuals in staying physically active while at home, below are a set of examples of home-based exercises based on exercises prepared by WHO Europe.
**Knee to elbow**

Touch one knee with the opposite elbow, alternating sides. Find your own pace. Try to perform this for 1–2 minutes, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise should increase your heart and breathing rates.

**Plank**

Support your forearms firmly on the ground, with the elbows under the shoulders. Keep the hips at the level of the head. Hold for 20–30 seconds (or more, if possible and try to build up to 1 minute), rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your belly, arms and legs.
Back extensions

Touch your ears with your fingertips and lift your upper body, keeping the legs on the ground. Lower the upper body again. Perform this exercise 10–15 times (or more), rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your back muscles.

Squats

Place your feet at hip distance with the toes pointing slightly outwards. Bend the knees as much as feels comfortable, keeping the heels on the ground and the knees over (not in front of) the feet. Bend and stretch the legs. Perform this exercise 10–15 times, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your legs and glutes.
Side knee lifts

Touch your knee with your elbow, lifting the knee to the side, alternating sides. Find your own pace. Try to perform this for 1–2 minutes, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise should increase your heart and breathing rates.

Superman

Place your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Lift one arm forward and the opposite leg back, alternating sides. Perform this exercise 20–30 times, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your belly, glutes and back muscles.
**Bridge**

Plant your feet firmly on the ground with the knees over the heels. Lift the hips as much as it feels comfortable and slowly lower them again. Perform this exercise 10–15 times, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your glutes.

**Chair dips**

Hold onto the seat of a sturdy chair, with your feet about half a metre away from the chair. Bend your arms as you lower your hips to the ground, then straighten the arms. Perform this exercise 10–15 times, rest for 30–60 seconds, and repeat up to 5 times. This exercise strengthens your triceps.
Chest opener

Interlace your fingers behind your back. Stretch your arms and open your chest forward. Hold this position for 20–30 seconds (or more). This position stretches your chest and shoulders.

Child’s pose

With the knees on the ground, bring your hips to your heels. Rest your belly on your thighs and actively stretch your arms forward. Breathe normally. Hold this position for 20–30 seconds (or more). This position stretches your back, shoulders and sides of the body.
**Seated meditation**

Sit comfortably on the floor with your legs crossed (alternatively, sit on a chair). Make sure your back is straight. Close your eyes, relax your body and progressively deepen your breathing. Concentrate on your breath, trying not to focus on any thoughts or concerns. Remain in this position for 5–10 minutes or more, to relax and clear your mind.

**Legs up the wall**

Bring your hips close (5–10 cm) to the wall and let your legs rest. Close your eyes, relax your body and progressively deepen your breathing. Concentrate on your breath, trying not to focus on any thoughts or concerns. Rest in this pose for up to 5 minutes. This position is meant to be comfortable, relaxing and de-stressing.
Examples of home-based exercises for older adults to improve Strength and Balance – spread these exercises throughout the day

**Exercise 1: Single Limb Stance**

It’s best to start off with a simple balance exercise for older adults.

Stand behind a steady, solid chair (not one with wheels), and hold on to the back of it. Lift up your right foot and balance on your left foot. Hold that position for as long as you can (about 30 seconds - 1 minute), then switch feet.

The goal should be to stand on one foot without holding onto the chair and hold that pose for up to a minute.

**Exercise 2: Walking Heel to Toe**

This exercise makes your legs stronger, which enables you to walk without falling.

Put your right foot in front of your left foot so that the heel of your right foot touches the top of the toes of your left foot. Move your left foot in front of your right, putting your weight on your heel. Then, shift your weight to your toes. Repeat the step with your left foot. Walk this way for 20 steps.
Exercise 3: Rock the Boat

Stand with your feet apart, so that the space between them is the same width as your hips. Make sure both feet are pressed into the ground firmly. Stand straight, with your head level. Then, transfer your weight to your right foot and slowly lift your left leg off the ground. Hold that position for as long as possible (but no more than 30 seconds).

Slowly put your foot back onto the ground, then transfer your weight to that foot. Slowly lift your opposite leg. Start by doing this exercise for balance five times per side, then work your way up to more repetitions.

Exercise 4: Clock Reach

You’ll need a sturdy chair for this exercise.

Imagine that you are standing in the centre of a clock. The number 12 is directly in front of you and the number 6 is directly behind you. Hold the chair with your left hand.

Lift your right leg and extend your right arm so it’s pointing to the number 12. Next, point your arm towards the number three, and finally, point it behind you at the number 6. Bring your arm back to the number three, and then to the number 12. Look straight ahead the whole time.

Repeat this exercise twice per side.
Exercise 5: Back Leg Raises

This strength training exercise for seniors makes your bottom and your lower back stronger.

Stand behind a sturdy chair. Slowly lift your right leg straight back – don’t bend your knees or point your toes. Hold that position for one second, then gently bring your leg back down. Repeat this 10 to 15 times per leg.

Exercise 6: Single Limb Stance with Arm

This balance exercise for seniors improves your physical coordination.

Stand with your feet together and arms at your side next to a chair. Lift your left hand over your head. Then, slowly raise your left foot off the floor. Hold that position for ten seconds. Repeat the same action on the right side.
Exercise 7: Side Leg Raise

You’ll need a sturdy chair for this exercise to improve balance.

Stand behind the chair with your feet slightly apart. Slowly lift your right leg to the side. Keep your back straight, your toe facing forward, and stare straight ahead. Lower your right leg slowly. Repeat this exercise 10 to 15 times per leg.

Exercise 8: Wall Push ups

As long as you’ve got a wall, you can do this strength training exercise for seniors.

Stand an arm’s length in front of a wall that doesn’t have any paintings, decorations, windows or doors. Lean forward slightly and put your palms flat on the wall at the height and width of your shoulders. Keep your feet planted as you slowly bring your body towards the wall. Gently push yourself back so that your arms are straight. Do twenty of these.
Exercise 9: Marching in Place

Marching is a great balance exercise for seniors. If you need to hold onto something, do this exercise in front of a counter.

Standing straight, lift your right knee as high as you can. Lower it, then lift the left leg. Lift and lower your legs 20 times.

Exercise 10: Toe Lifts

This strength training exercise for seniors also improves balance. You’ll need a sturdy chair or a counter.

Stand straight and put your arms in front of you. Raise yourself up on your toes as high as you can go, then gently lower yourself. Don’t lean too far forward on the chair or counter. Lift and lower yourself 20 times.
Exercise 11: Sitting to Standing

![Image of person sitting and standing]

This exercise helps to strengthen the legs.
Sit on a sturdy chair. Sit to stand and back to sitting slowly without using hands to push off the chair. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

Exercise 12: Shoulder Rolls

![Image of shoulder rolls]

This is a simple exercise for seniors. You can do it seated or standing.
Rotate your shoulders gently up to the ceiling, then back and down. Next, do the same thing, but roll them forwards and then down.
Exercise 13: Hand and Finger Exercises

The following are exercises to improve flexibility. You don’t need to stand for these.

In the first exercise, pretend there’s a wall in front of you. Your fingers will climb the wall until they’re above your head. While holding your arms above your head, wiggle your fingers for ten seconds. Then, walk them back down.

During the second exercise, touch your hands while they’re behind your back. Reach for your left hand while your right hand is behind your back. Hold that position for ten seconds, then try with your other arm.

Exercise 14: Calf Stretches

These strength training exercises for seniors can be performed sitting or standing.

To do calf stretches while standing, find a wall with nothing on it. Stand facing the wall with your hands at eye level. Place your left leg behind your right leg. Keep your left heel on the floor and bend your right knee. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat two to four times per leg.

If you want to stretch your calves while sitting, you’ll need a towel. Sit on the floor with your legs straight. Put the towel around the soles of your right foot and hold both ends. Pull the towel towards you while keeping your knee straight and hold it for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat the exercise two to four times per leg.
Falls don’t have to be a fact of life – exercising can make you stronger and fitter. You don’t need fancy equipment, either – just pull up a chair!

Examples of home-based exercises for children and youths

The WHO recommends that children and youths between 5-17 years of age should engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity daily. And children below 5 years of age should engage in 180 minutes of physical activity of varied intensities daily which include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.

Exercise 1: Animal walks

Animal walks are simple and fun exercises that anyone can do to get a quick dose of gross motor play in their day. Simply put, they are exercises that resemble the animals they are named for. Some of the animal walks have classic instructions such as the crab walk, bear walk and frog jumps.

Many of these movements require core strength, balance, and agility which are wonderful for sensory input and regulating the sensory systems (especially when there is a problem). In addition Animal Walks are an excellent source of “heavy work” which is perfect for helping children that are struggling with fidgets, wiggles, and even meltdowns.

Crab Walk

Start by squatting down close to the ground. Lean backwards and place your hands on the ground. You should look like a “table top” now. Now walk sideways, while holding your bottom off the ground and your back straight.
Bear Walk

Start in the standing position. Bend over and put both hands on the ground. Now, walk forward with the same leg and arm. So, move your right arm and right leg forward, then the left leg and arm at the same time, then repeat. For additional challenge, try keeping your legs and arms straight.

Frog Jumps

Start in the squatted position. Place your hands on the floor in between your knees. Using your feet, jump forward and land with your hands and feet on the ground.

Additional Classic Walks:

Alligator Push-ups

Have your child lay on their belly and push up into a plank with their hands and toes. As they walk have them push up with their hands while trying to keep their bodies as straight as possible.
**Snake Slither**

Have your child lay on their belly and put their hands to their sides. Wiggling their hips and shoulders side to side, have them try to move forward across the floor without using their hands.

**Kangaroo Jumps**

Starting in the standing position, put both feet together and squat down. Jump as high as you can using only your feet, and no hands.

**Gorilla Walk**

Start in the squatted position with your hands at your chest. Walk down the hall while staying in the squatted position. For added gross motor exercise, try beating your chest with your fist as you walk.

**Caterpillar Crawl**

Start in a standing position and bend over with your hands and feet touch the floor. Try touching the floor as close to your toes as you can. Then slowly walk your hands away from your feet, as far as you can. Finally walk your feet back to your hands, always keeping your hands on the ground. Repeat this until you have walked across the room.
**Elephant Walk**
Start in the standing position and bend over with your hands held together. Keeping your back straight and parallel with the floor, hang your hands under your shoulders and swing them back and forth as you walk with straight legs across the floor.

**Exercise 2: Obstacle course**
Create a furniture course in your house or use bottles or cans to create an obstacle course. Ask your child to kick a ball slowly around these obstacles.
Or build an obstacle course with things that you have in the house. For example – drape a sheet between 2 chairs and create a tunnel to crawl under, pile cushions to create a mountain to climb over or insert a potato and spoon race in the obstacle course.

**Exercise 3: Wheelbarrow races**

![Wheelbarrow races](image)

Hold your child’s legs around his ankles. Tell your child to push up on extended arms and ask him to walk on his hands while you hold his legs. This gives a real workout.

**Exercise 4: Balloon ball**
There are endless ways to play with balloons indoors. Try to keep it off the ground or just play catch. Mix it up with balloon tennis.

**Exercise 5: Dance party**
Turn on the music and let your child dance and jump around.

**Exercise 6: Scavenger hunt**
Write up clues and hide them around the house. Children can race to find each clue for a small prize at the end.
Exercise 7: Jumping jacks

Simple but good for coordination and they get your heart going. Do 10-15 repetitions. Rest and repeat 3-5 times.

Exercise 8: Parachute

This kiddie gym standby can be re-created at home with sheets. Each child takes an end of the sheet and fans it upward while one of you runs underneath.

Exercise 9: Bubble wrap attack

If you have bubble wrap, jump on it until it's all popped.

Exercise 10: Tickle tag

Chase your children. When you catch them, it's tickle time.

Exercise 11: Carnival: Set up carnival games such as "Knock Down the Milk Cans" (you can use empty yoghurt cups or plastic cups).

Exercise 12: Bowling

Fill up water bottles and use any ball you have.

Exercise 13: Hopscotch

Use tape to make a game on your floor.
Exercise 14: Mountain Climbers

Get into a push-up position and then alternate bringing your knee to your elbow. You can do same side connections or crisscross. The idea is to move fast and work up a sweat. Do 10-12 repetitions. Rest and repeat 3-5 times.

Exercise 15: Burpees

Who is up for the challenge? Start in standing, then drop to a plank and then jump up. It should be one fluid motion and try to not pause between repetitions. Do 10-15 repetitions. Rest and repeat 3-5 times.
Exercise 17: Squats

Children are naturally born squatters. See who can get the deepest squat or the most squats in 60 seconds. To do this one, stand with your feet shoulder’s width apart, and do deep knee bends. Make sure keep your knees behind your toes and your arms out straight. Rest and repeat 3-5 times.

Exercise 18: Fast feet

Jog fast on the spot for about 30 seconds - 1 minute. Take a 20 second break and repeat for 5 times.

Exercise 19: Lunges

Forward Lunge

Start from the standing position, step forward with the right leg, bend the knee so that the knee is over the toes and not beyond the toes, then go back to standing. Repeat with the other leg. Do 10-15 repetitions. Rest and repeat 3-5 times.
Reverse Lunge

Start from the standing position, step back and down with the left leg and keep front knee over the toes, then step forward back to standing. Repeat with the other leg. Do 10-15 repetitions. Rest and repeat 3-5 times.

Exercise 20: Plank

1. This variation, one of the most common ways to perform a plank, is slightly easier than holding your body up with just your hands. Place forearms on the floor with elbows aligned below shoulders and arms parallel to your body at about shoulder width.

2. Ground toes into the floor and squeeze glutes to stabilize your body. Your legs should be working, too — be careful not to lock or hyperextend your knees.

3. Neutralize your neck and spine by looking at a spot on the floor. Your head should be in line with your back.

4. Hold the position for 20 seconds. As you get more comfortable, hold your plank for as long as possible without compromising your form or breath.
Exercise 21: Plank with Shoulder Taps

Plank shoulder taps are an advanced variation on the classic plank position and will work your core as well as your shoulders and chest. To perform this exercise, start in a press-up position and make sure your hands are directly under your shoulders and your feet are in line with your hips. Alternately lift your hands to tap the opposite shoulder. Carry out 12 repetitions. Rest and repeat 3 times.

Examples of home-based exercises for children under 5 years-of-age

Babies (under 1 year)

Babies should be encouraged to be active throughout the day, every day in a variety of ways. Initially it is important to encourage babies to be physically active by reaching and grasping, pulling and pushing, moving their head, body and limbs during daily routines, and during supervised floor play. Age appropriate toys such as rattles and blocks can all facilitate movement and a degree of physical activity.

It is important to include at least 30 minutes of supervised tummy time on a blanket on the floor spread throughout the day when they are awake. Once babies start crawling and moving around, it is important to encourage them to be as active as possible in a safe and supervised play environment. Babies should crawl on the floor for safety reasons to avoid accidents.
Due to COVID-19, it is important that the floor is kept clean and people should take off their shoes before entering the house.
Toddlers (aged 1 to 2)

Toddlers should be physically active every day for at least 180 minutes (3 hours) and this should be spread throughout the day. The 180 minutes can include light activity such as standing up, moving around, rolling and playing, as well as more energetic activity like skipping, hopping, running and jumping. During active play toddlers should be supervised at all times.
Pre-schoolers (aged 3 to 4)

Preschool children should spend at least 180 minutes (3 hours) a day doing a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, including active play. Activities should include arts, crafts and throwing and catching a ball. The 180 minutes should include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA), which can consist of dancing to music and active play such as jumping. Children should be supervised at all times during these activities.