

MSK Newsletter

Improving your fitness edition

Issue 2
February 2024



Making People Better

Show your physical health some love this Valentine's Day

Getting to know your body by testing your own fitness level is a great way to show yourself some love this Valentine's Day.

Measuring fitness isn't just for people who go to the gym, doing some simple tests can give you a guideline from which to improve on and work towards feeling your best.

Our musculoskeletal (MSK) experts here at Vita Health Group have shared four functional tests you can do at home as well as easy-to-follow exercises to improve core strength, leg strength, balance and agility. Please check with your GP or a healthcare professional before starting exercise.

Four functional tests you can do at home

For each of the following tests, we've shared how to calculate or measure your results. It's important you don't get too hung up on where you fall in the stakes and instead see your results as a springboard for bettering your health.





How to test: Cardio capacity

What's the test?

12-minute walk/run.

What's the aim of the test?

To assess cardiovascular fitness.

How to perform the 12-minute walk/run test

1. Use a flat, measurable route - a treadmill, flat road route or athletics track is ideal
2. Warm up the body by walking at pace for 3-4 minutes
3. Once you've warmed up, set a stopwatch and run or walk at as fast a pace as you can sustain for 12-minutes.

How to measure your results

Excellent = 1.46 miles (2.35 km) or more

Good = 1.33 to 1.45 miles (2.14 to 2.33 km)

Fair = 1.32 to 1.26 miles (2.12 to 2.03 km)

Needs improvement = 1.25 miles (2.01 km) or less



How to test: Lower limb strength

What's the test?

Sit-to-stand test.

What's the aim of the test?

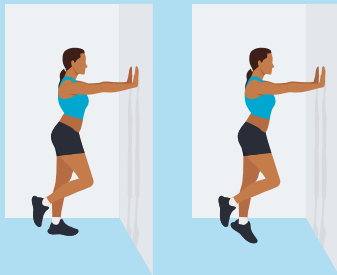
To assess functional lower extremity strength.

How to perform the sit-to-stand test

1. Sit in the middle of a chair, back straight, feet approximately shoulder width apart. Cross your arms over your chest to avoid using them.
2. Complete as many full stands as possible within 30 seconds without using your arms to push you up. Fully sit between each stand.

How to calculate your lower limb strength

Your score is the total number of stands within 30 seconds. Scores will range from 0 for those who cannot complete one stand to greater than 20 for fitter individuals. The higher you score, the better your functional mobility strength. You could do this test every couple of months to measure your progress throughout the year.



How to test: Strength and endurance of calf

What's the test?

Single leg calf raise.

How to perform a single leg calf raise

1. Use a wall to help you maintain your balance
2. Stand on the leg you wish to exercise
3. Push up onto the ball of your foot and slowly lower. Ensure you are not using the wall to pull yourself up
4. Continue until you can't complete any more with good form.

How to measure your results

The calf is an often overlooked muscle group in the legs and is important for many day-to-day activities such as walking or balancing, as well as sporting activities such as running and jumping.

The average norms for the following age ranges are as follows. Scoring below these average norms indicates improvements can be made.

Age	Men reps.	Women reps.
20-29 yrs	37	30 reps
30-39 yrs	32	27
40-49 yrs	28	24
50-59 yrs	23	21
60-69 yrs	19	19



How to test: Longevity - including heart health, balance, agility, core, coordination and flexibility

What's the test?

Sit rising test.

How to perform the sit rising test

1. Start from a standing position
2. Lower yourself to the floor and sit cross-legged
3. Stand up without support.

How to measure your results

At standing, you have 10 points. Subtract a point every time you use your hand, knee, forearm, or side of your leg to support yourself. If you can sit and stand with no assistance, you scored a perfect 10. If you could not get up at all, your score is zero. You're looking for a score of eight points or more but bear-in-mind that the test does have its limitations.

This test does not take musculoskeletal conditions or injuries into account. Try it with friends and family for a fun activity. Do not attempt this if you have an injury or think you won't be able to get off the floor.

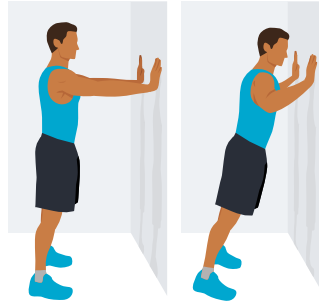
Nine at-home exercises to improve core strength, leg strength, balance and agility

Give yourself a day's rest in between doing strengthening exercises to allow your body to adapt and get stronger.



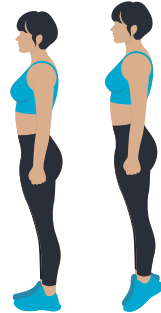
Step-ups

6-10 repetitions on each leg, two-three sets with a break in between each.



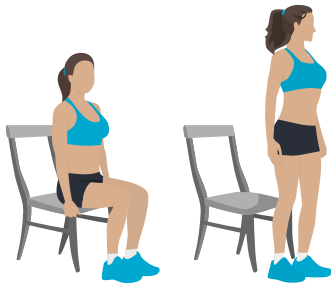
Wall press ups

15-20 reps, two-three sets with a break in between each.



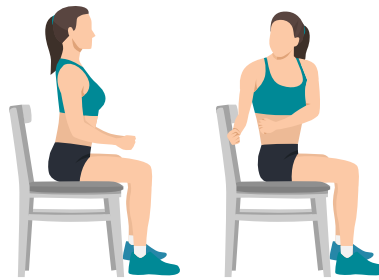
Calf raises

Raise heels up for a count of five and down for a count of five. Five reps, rest for 30-seconds, repeat three times.



Sit-to-stands using a chair with the aim of progressing to squats

5 reps, two-three sets with a break in between each.



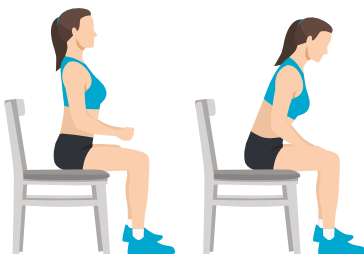
Seated trunk rotation

10 reps, two-three sets with a break in between each.



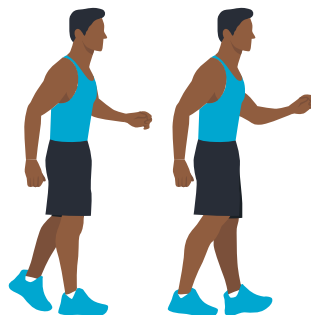
Wrist stretches

Eight to 12 reps on each side, two-three sets with a break in between each.



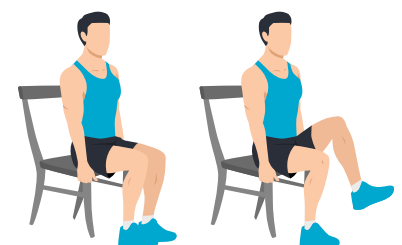
Sitting pelvic tilts with the aim of progressing to a bridge

20 reps, five sets with a break in between each.



Heel-to-toe walking

Place your left heel directly in front of your right big toe and walk five steps. Three-four sets with a break in between each.



Marches and seated marches

10 reps on each leg, two-three sets with a break in between each.



Keen to start improving your fitness? Here are four different ways to track your exercise

1

Set SMART goals

Set yourself small but specific mini-goals using the SMART protocol. Using SMART goals can help you ensure that your goals are attainable within a certain time frame.

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**chievable
- R**elevant
- T**ime-Bound

2

Couch to 5k

Taking up running can seem like a scary prospect, especially if you feel out of shape or unfit. The NHS Couch to 5K will help you gradually work up towards running 5km in just 9 weeks, by gradually increasing your cardiovascular fitness.

Download the NHS Couch to 5K app on your mobile or device from your chosen app store.

3

Active 10

The Active 10 app records every minute of walking you do (anonymously) and shows you how you can increase your intensity to benefit your health. The app tracks your steps, helps you set goals, shows you your achievements and gives you tips to boost your activity.

Download the Active 10 app on your mobile or device from your chosen app store.

4

Conquer

Conquer is a virtual fitness challenge to help motivate you to walk, run, cycle, or complete any distance based exercise. When you start tracking your progress you'll receive postcards of the locations you would see if you were to walk, run or cycle to the destination. Each challenge can be completed in the time-frame that suits you, either individually or in teams, and you'll receive a virtual medal at the end of each challenge.

Contact us

 wellness@vhg.co.uk

 vitahealthgroup.co.uk