

# Take your seats ladies and gentlemen

Staying fit and physically active doesn't necessarily mean you have to stand up, says Martin Feaver

The human body loves to move and through movement it changes. Muscles become stronger and breathing gets easier. You quickly shift from noticing what you can't do to what you can do. Admittedly it may start with small improvements – arm strength improves so getting up from a chair seems to be easier with less push off needed, or it's easier to stand and wash up – but over time these little changes have a big impact on the life you lead.

If you are reading this sitting in a wheelchair, have trouble walking or find standing unaided or for long periods daunting, or if you feel that getting around is hard enough and exercising an impossibility, the good news is there are many exercises you can do whilst seated. Using a chair for support while exercising can make a real difference to your life.

Chair-based routines enable you to exercise safely and effectively. When you exercise sitting down, the lower spine is supported and your back is less vulnerable – this is particularly beneficial if you have a back

problem. Sitting down means the weight your body has to bear is reduced, this is important if you have



# men...

poor balance or arthritic pain. If standing is a problem you will have a greater range of movement, with the chair providing points of leverage and support; and, perhaps most significantly, your confidence will grow.

## A class act

And if you think chair-based exercises are the easy option, take a look at the range of classes available. Just as leisure centres and local authorities provide a range of classes to meet the needs of their customers, chair-based exercise classes can also be varied in their intensity, content and focus. There are chair-based classes in general mobility and strength, cardiac rehabilitation, over 50s, Parkinson's Disease, returning to standing – the list is growing ever longer as people realise the range of benefits of chair-based exercise. To find out more about classes in your area try contacting your local sports centre, NHS trust, local authority or charities such as Extend.

## Finding the balance

It is about more than the physical benefits, though, the most empowering factor of an exercise class is the social contact – and chair-based classes are fantastic if you feel isolated due to mobility problems. Anyone joining a class for the first time can find the experience daunting, but by focusing on people who find movement a challenge, chair-based exercise classes are organised to meet the individual's specific needs. Toilets and accessibility

requirements are always a priority at leisure centres, whilst specially trained instructors and staff will ensure you gain the most from your exercise session.

So exercise doesn't have to be overwhelming or intimidating – and it can often be our minds that stop our bodies from moving. Your body doesn't discriminate against you on the grounds of age, gender or ability. You move, the body changes and benefits; you stay still, the body fades and weakens. That's why movement – any movement – is such a vital part of life.

## The benefits

- Increased strength
- Increased muscular power
- Improved flexibility
- Improvements in balance
- Reduced risk of falling
- Reduction in arthritic pain
- Improvement in mood
- Reduction in body fat
- Increased range of movement
- Everyday tasks are easier to perform
- Improved posture
- Improved sleep patterns

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### Extend

Providing recreational movement to music for over 60s and less able people of all ages across the UK. **01582 832760, [extend.org.uk](http://extend.org.uk) [admin@extend.org.uk](mailto:admin@extend.org.uk)**