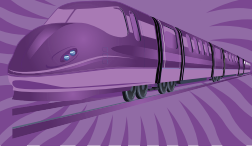


# The Wellness Express™



Jump on the train to good health

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## Simple & Effective Home Exercises for Strength

Presented by: Total Health Systems

TotalHealthSystems.com

### Introduction

Strength training is an important part of an overall plan for health and fitness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, strength training can help reduce the signs and symptoms of arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, depression and back pain.<sup>1</sup> The CDC notes that strength training - the use of resistance to build the size, strength and anaerobic endurance of your skeletal muscles - is safe and effective for people of all ages and that people with existing health conditions often benefit most from engaging in several strength training sessions per week.

Training in a gym works for many people but not everyone. Some people find the convenience of exercising at home to be just what is needed to stay consistent with and motivated for their exercise plan. In this edition of the Wellness Express, we describe several exercises you can perform at home with no exercise equipment. Always talk with your chiropractor before starting a strength-training routine. Your chiropractor can help you assess what exercises would be best for you and your specific health and fitness needs.

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### Exercise 1: Side Plank

The side plank is a simple and powerful exercise that activates and strengthens many of your core muscles. A study published in the journal *Physical Therapy* states that the side plank exercise (also known as the horizontal side support exercise) challenges your abdominal wall muscles, especially your lateral oblique muscles, in a way that minimizes spinal compression, which can be helpful for people who have low back injuries.<sup>2</sup>



To perform the side plank, lie on your side on a mat. Place your forearm on the mat under your shoulder (and perpendicular to your body). Put your upper leg on top of your lower leg and straighten your knees and hips. Lift your body upward so that your entire body (including your head and neck) are in a straight line. Most people hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds before repeating on the opposite side, but you should ask your chiropractor what is most appropriate for you.

### Exercise of the Week

#### Lumbar flexion – “angry cat”

Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your Chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise)

**Start:** On hands and knees. Be aware of position of spine – start with a neutral spine or a flat back.

**Exercise:** Engage inner abdominals first by bringing belly button inwards. Then, curl lower back up toward ceiling. Imagine belly button pushing lumbar spine up toward the ceiling. Also tuck chin in toward chest to create full spinal flexion. Hold for 10-15 seconds.



Remember to breathe while you are holding this position.

Modification: Support your body with your knees instead of your feet. This will reduce the level of challenge associated with this exercise.

## Exercise 2: Bodyweight Squat

Performing the bodyweight squat exercise is an effective way to improve your lower body strength. The American Council on Exercise notes that the bodyweight squat is suitable for beginners and targets the following muscle groups: Abs, glutes, thighs, and lower leg muscles.<sup>3</sup> The bodyweight squat exercise is exactly what its name implies: A conventional squat exercise using nothing more than your own bodyweight.



Perform the bodyweight squat by standing with your feet slightly wider than hip-width and with toes pointing straight ahead or slightly turned out. Keeping your hands at your sides (or away from your body for balance), engage your abdominal muscles to stabilize your spine, hinge at your hips, and slowly bend your knees to lower yourself toward the floor. Shift your weight back into your heels as you continue to lower yourself. Keep your knees from moving too far forward beyond your toes and keep your back flat. Once your thighs are parallel (or nearly parallel) to the floor, return to the upright position. Ask your chiropractor about how many sets and repetitions of this exercise are appropriate for you.

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## Exercise 3: Push-ups

The push-up is another simple home exercise that is commonly used to build body strength. In fact, the New York Times calls push-ups “the ultimate barometer of fitness.”<sup>4</sup> Push-ups primarily work your pectoral, triceps and anterior deltoid muscles, though the rest of your deltoids, your serratus anterior muscles, your core muscles and even your leg muscles are also worked by this timeless exercise. How you perform it may be important for joint health. A study published in the *Journal of Biomechanics* reports that where you place your hands during a push-up can significantly affect the forces on your elbow joints. Hands positioned either “apart” or “above” the “normal” position appear to decrease the overall joint load on your elbows.<sup>5</sup>

To perform a textbook push-up, lie face down on the floor and place your hands slightly wider than your shoulders. Support your lower body using your toes and lift your entire body up so that you are balanced on your hands and toes. Keeping your feet together, maintain a straight line with your body from head to heel. Engage your abdominal muscles and inhale as you slowly bend your elbows and lower yourself until your elbows reach a 90 degree angle. Return to the starting position, keeping your elbows slightly bent at the top. Discuss the appropriate number of sets and repetitions with your chiropractor.

Modification: Support your body with your knees instead of your toes. This will reduce the level of challenge associated with this exercise.

## Quote to Inspire

*“Being entirely honest with oneself is a good exercise”*

*Sigmund Freud*

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