



Toolkit for

HOME-BASED INCONTINENCE CARE

Supporting older women and
men, and their caregivers, in
low resource settings.

Introduction

This toolkit was developed in Malawi and designed by older women and men living with incontinence, alongside their caregivers, in collaboration with MANEPO.

In 2024, older people and caregivers shared the challenges they face with daily self-care. A team from MANEPO then worked with them to develop a step-by-step toolkit to address these daily challenges and provide home-based ways for improving their daily routine and quality of life. Insights and recommendations were also provided by HelpAge International and its Network Members, including Convite A.C. (Venezuela) and HelpAge Tanzania, as well as the older people living with incontinence whom they support.



About MANEPO:

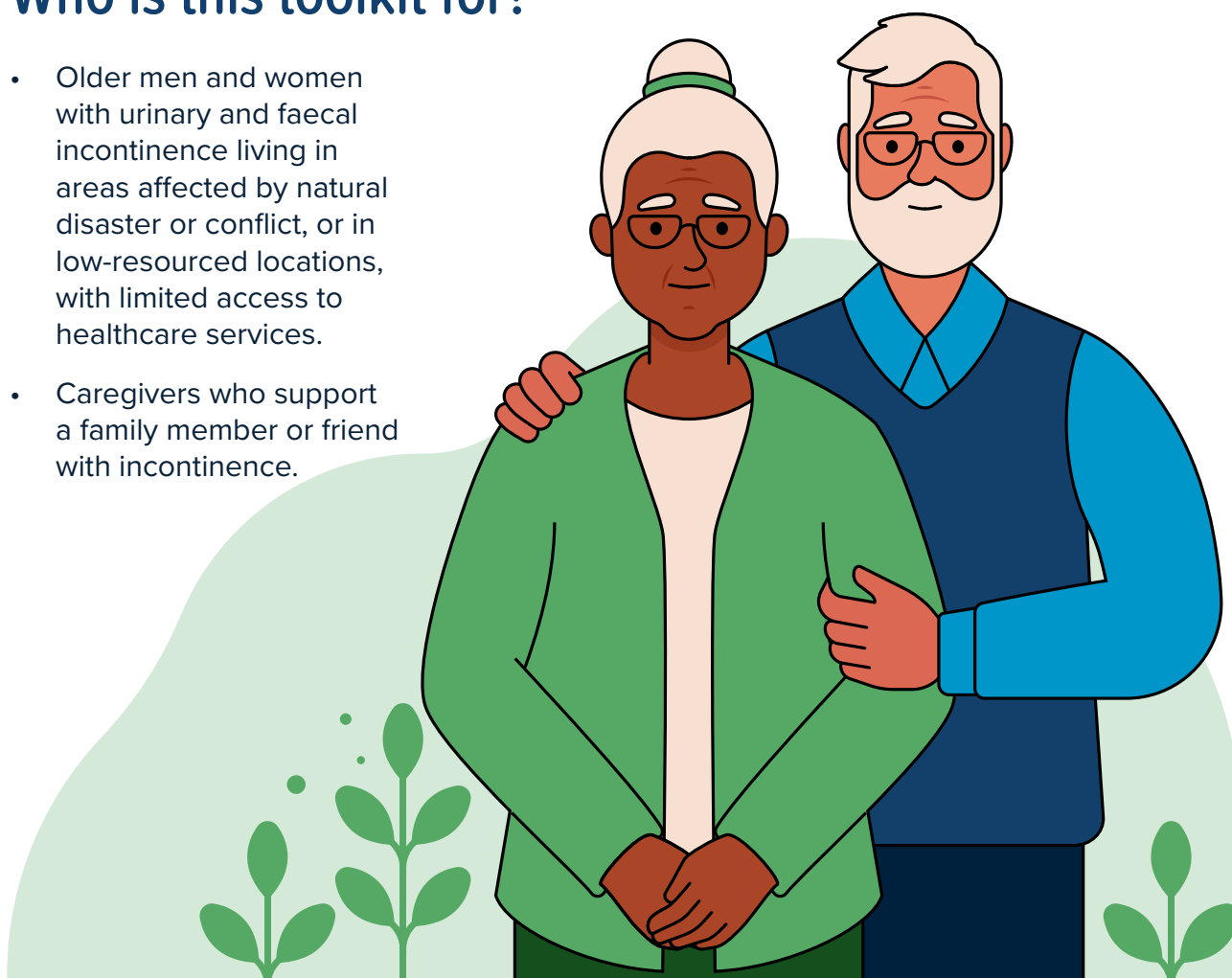
MANEPO brings together over 60 organisations in Malawi to collectively focus on improving the dignity and wellbeing of older persons.

Learn more: <https://manepo.org/>



Who is this toolkit for?

- Older men and women with urinary and faecal incontinence living in areas affected by natural disaster or conflict, or in low-resourced locations, with limited access to healthcare services.
- Caregivers who support a family member or friend with incontinence.



Why use this toolkit?

This toolkit is intended to encourage older people with incontinence to identify key issues in their daily routine and find realistic and practical solutions that can be worked on over a period of 6 weeks to 3 months, allowing time to see results.

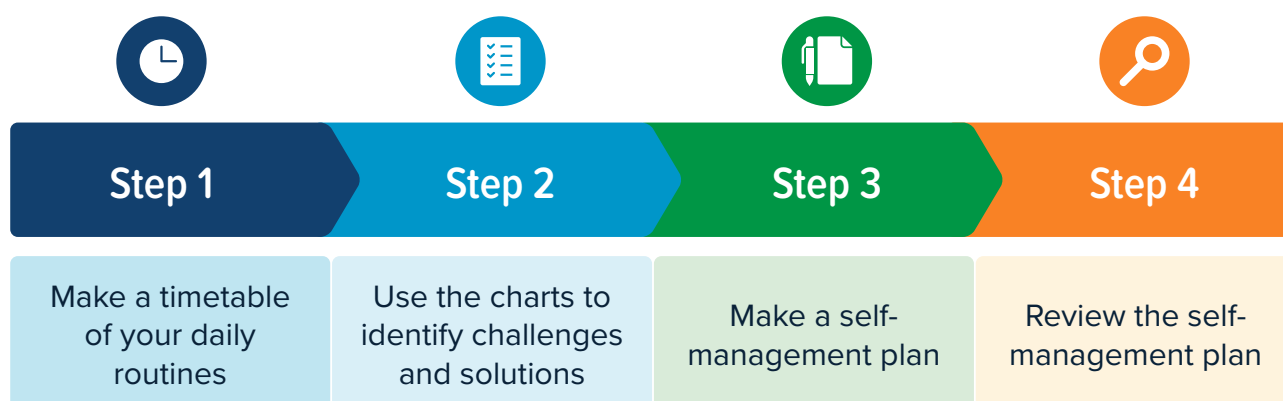
The main aim is for people who suffer incontinence to use the toolkit in the comfort of their homes. But it can also be used by organisations that provide outreach or home-based support to older people, perhaps as a community-based activity to be included in ongoing programmes.

This toolkit can help raise awareness within communities about the challenges of living with incontinence and provide practical solutions to reduce the associated stigma.

How to use this toolkit:

This toolkit is organised into 4 key steps that aim to make your daily lives less challenging.

Please take time to get to know the steps and discuss them with your caretaker to make sure you feel comfortable. You can add any other activities from your experience to make the steps more relevant to your personal needs.



Step 1. Make a timetable of your daily routines:

A timetable will help you understand:

- ▶ what time / when you are having most challenges in managing your incontinence.
- ▶ what time / when you feel more emotional or frustrated.

This information will help you:

- to identify challenges in your daily routine; and
- to find ways to better manage your incontinence and reduce the emotional challenges.

Working together with your caregiver:

As a caregiver, you can help your family member or friend to identify the challenges they face and to select the most practical solutions.

You can also encourage your family member or friend to adopt a daily routine. It is useful to work together to make sure the timetable fits with your daily routine.



This information will also help your caretaker to make a plan that works best for you.



Step 2. Work through the 5 charts to:

- A** Look at triggers and factors that impact your incontinence on a daily basis.
- B** Find ways to improve your wellbeing and social engagement.
- C** Strengthen relationships with caregivers and family members.
- D** Find low-cost solutions for managing incontinence at home.
- E** Look at ways to raise awareness and improve health services to meet your needs.

- ▶ Select one chart (or more) that is useful for your needs.
- ▶ In each chart, identify 1 or 2 challenges and select 1 or 2 solutions to work on.



These solutions, or others, will form the daily self-management plan for you to follow.



Step 3. Make a self-management plan based on your daily routine

- ▶ The aim is to follow this plan for 6 weeks (or more) to see how it makes a difference to your daily life.



Step 4. Review the self-management plan

- ▶ After 6 weeks (or more), review your plan and make changes if the solutions have not made a difference to you.

LET'S GET STARTED.

We hope
the advice is
useful!



Step 1. Make a timetable of your daily routines

Let's look at your daily routine to identify your challenges.

What are the most challenging times of day for you to manage your incontinence?

Circle one emoji to show how you feel at different times of the day.

Morning



Afternoon



Evening



Night



- ▶ Consider when you need to go to the toilet or need to change because of leakages, etc.
- ▶ Consider when you feel most positive during the day.
- ▶ Consider the times you eat and drink.
- ▶ See if there is a pattern between specific times of the day, the number of times you need the toilet, or times you are wet or soiled.



Step 2. Use the charts to identify challenges and solutions



A Managing incontinence – looking at triggers/factors to understand patterns of incontinence

Consider your level of mobility and tick the box that is most relevant to you:

Older man or older woman with limited mobility

Older man and woman with fear of falling

Active older woman and man in the home

Supported by caregiver to guide the toileting routine

Select one or two activities from this list and plan to build them into your daily routine:

To better control your incontinence and improve your life: Change your daily routines, such as using the toilet every hour, or drinking less in the evening.

To build your strength and make your movements easier (getting up and down from the floor, from your bed or seat):
Try to do daily sitting or standing exercises – such as 5 exercises 3 times a day for 10 mins – and increase the number each week.

To help prevent falls and improve your balance:

1. Stand with feet together, eyes open, and hold steady for 10 seconds, increasing to 30 seconds over time. Once you can do this exercise for 30 seconds with minimal swaying or support, move on to the next exercise.
2. Stand on one foot, eyes open, and hold steady for 10 seconds, working up to 30 seconds.

To prevent bedsores and broken skin:

Work with your caregiver to regularly change position in bed or while sitting on a chair.

Consider your level of incontinence and tick all that are most relevant to you:

Leakage of urine

Leakage of urine and faeces

Unmanageable frequency of leakage of urine or faeces with poor access to assistive products

Manageable leakage of urine or faeces with assistive products

Other

Select one or two activities from this list and plan to build them into your daily routine:

Drink more in the morning and less in the afternoon (make sure to drink enough fluid to meet your needs).

Limit the amount you drink from dinner time onwards if you are often getting up to go to the toilet overnight (once a night is considered normal).

Try out exercises to control leakages of urine or faeces.

1. Sit upright on a chair or on the bed or stand up.
2. Practise short and long squeezes regularly, once a day and at the same time if possible:
 - Do 10 slow squeezes between your legs, counting to 10 for each squeeze. Try not to hold your stomach in.
 - Do 10 fast squeezes between your legs, counting to 1 for each squeeze.
 - Rest for 4 counts between each set of squeezes.



TOP TIPS:

- Be patient. It can take 3 months for the exercises to work in helping to reduce leakages.
- You can do more squeezes if it becomes easy.
- If you are concerned about the odour in your room, use ashes, charcoal or vinegar to cover the waste in a bucket, and make sure to use a lid.

B**Impact on daily participation – looking at emotional wellbeing****Consider your level of mobility and tick all that are most relevant to you:**

Lack of motivation

Feelings of isolation

Feeling useless

Embarrassment because of living conditions (e.g., odours, poor hygiene)

Living with challenging relations with caregiver

Limited social interaction with family

Limited social gatherings with community

Other

Select one or two activities from this list and plan to build them into your daily routine:

Work with your caregivers or close family members to discuss your daily challenges in living with incontinence and concerns for your future.

In your daily routine, find a time each day for in-person interactions with family, friends, and neighbours.

Find activities in the home to motivate you to feel part of the family.

Find an activity that you enjoy, restart an old interest with your caregiver or with your family and friends.

Plan to go out of the house 2-3 times a day, if possible, to meet others or get fresh air.

Share any feelings of isolation with others and look for solutions together.

See if you can find other people with incontinence in the community to support, to share lived experiences with, and to set up support groups.



For older people with complex needs and difficulties in communicating and concentrating, the caregiver's role is vital to stimulate/encourage the individual to decide on what they want to do.

C

Relationships with the caregiver and other family members

Consider challenges that you experience with your caregiver and tick a box that is relevant to you:

Difficulty for your caregiver to accept their role

Difficulty in having discussions with the caregiver about the challenges you both face in living with incontinence

Difficulty in managing time together when most needed

Other

Select one or two activities from this list and plan to build them into your daily routine:

Talk together on how best to support each other

Talk about the challenges you face in living with incontinence

Ask your caregiver how he or she feels about taking on this role

Make time to talk about other things together, not only about personal hygiene issues

Consider if your carer is the best person based on their gender

Identify if anyone else can take on carer responsibilities to share the care and support

As a caregiver, find a way to communicate using your own signs and systems to encourage communication and stimulation

D**Lack of assistive products and limited budget to meet daily needs**

Consider your level of incontinence and tick the box that is most relevant to you in your home:

Difficulties with hygiene at home.

Materials not sufficient to meet daily needs.

Difficulty accessing toilet or toilet chair.

Difficulty reaching markets to find assistive products.

Select one or two activities from this list and plan to build them into your daily routine:

Where possible, review your daily habits to see if you can change your toileting routine (for example, monitor when you are leaking during the day and try to start using the toilet before it happens).

Try to use local assistive products where possible (for example, ask local tailors to sew absorbent washable pads, like child pads).

If you are able to stand and transfer to use the toilet, make a toilet chair with a back and arms from local materials. Make sure the seat is smooth to avoiding cutting your skin.

Consider using waterproof umbrella fabric and fleece/ flannel fabric to make a mattress protector and bedding.

Use a light waterproof material as a bed sheet to protect the mattress.

Make sure you can sit at the side of your bed, placing your feet on the ground to make it easier to get in and out of bed (for example, by raising up legs using bricks or logs, etc.)

Move furniture or storage materials in the home to make it easier to move around the room.

E**Access to appropriate public health services**

Consider your challenges in accessing health services and tick the box that is most relevant to you:

Difficulty in accessing health and public health facilities

Difficulty in finding medical staff to provide useful treatment

Difficulty in finding staff to provide counselling

This might be challenging for you to manage alone. Look for sanitation, health and hygiene professionals to help you make a complaint, if available.

If possible, try to build support groups in your area and share your concerns. When organised as a community, it may be easier to go to the local authorities and health professionals.

Link with community groups to prepare minimal health care standards.



Step 3. Make a self-management plan

Place your selected activities in a small self-management table to guide your next steps. We found it useful to have a routine so that we keep up the activities and stay organised. We've included some examples below to help you do this.

Then, follow your daily plan and make time to practise your activities for 6 weeks or more (up to 3 months) to see if you feel more active and in control of your daily life. It is important to follow your chosen activity routinely based on your daily plan. Decide on the best time (morning, afternoon, or evening) to follow your activities.



Make a morning and afternoon plan



Make an evening and night plan

If useful, you can record on a daily or weekly basis what you do and how your efforts are progressing or not – it is good practice and helpful to follow what you have achieved.



Your caregiver can help you to set up a daily routine and motivate you to maintain it.

See the Template Self-Management Plan at the end of this toolkit



Step 4. Review the self-management plan

After 6 weeks or more of following your plan, take time to see if there have been any improvements in your selected areas of work.

Ask yourself:		
Did I find it easy to do the chosen activities?	YES	NO
Do I need to continue this practice?	YES	NO
Do I need to look for other challenges and find solutions?	YES If you answered yes, identify other challenges, follow the same process and revise your plan.	NO

Here are some examples to help guide you:



A. Managing incontinence

List your challenge	List your solutions	How will you change your routine to make time for these actions?	How will your caregiver change his or her daily routine to make time for these actions?
Example: challenge 1 Feeling unsafe getting out of bed	Doing daily exercises to improve my balance and coordination to make it easier to get out of bed	Practise the set of standing exercises twice a day (morning and evening)	Do the exercises together with my caregiver to make sure I do it
Example: challenge 2 Having small leakages when I stand up	Do pelvic floor exercises 3 times a day – squeeze legs together and pull up for 10 seconds, release and repeat 10 times – do this 3 times a day	Practise this set of exercises in standing or sitting 3 times a day singing a song as you do them	Check with caregiver if needed
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			



B. Impact on daily participation

List your challenge	List your solutions	How will you change your routine to make time for these actions?	How will your caregiver change his or her daily routine to make time for these actions?
Example: challenge 1 <i>Feeling of isolation</i>	<i>Discuss your concerns with a family member or friend to plan to link with others – look for people in the community to support</i>	<i>2 to 3 times a week plan to meet a friend or others to meet up (for example, play board games, meet grandchildren).</i>	<i>My caregiver will help me to go out 2 to 3 times a week if needed</i>
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			

List your challenge	List your solutions	How will you change your routine to make time for these actions?	How will your caregiver change his or her daily routine to make time for these actions?
Example: challenge 1 <i>Difficulty in managing time together when most needed</i>	<i>Work together to make a diary of daily habits related to toileting patterns</i>	<i>Follow this plan to see if it helps me better manage my incontinence</i>	<i>Work together to follow this plan to see if it helps</i>
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			



D. Limited assistive products

List your challenge	List your solutions	How will you change your routine to make time for these actions?	How will your caregiver change his or her daily routine to make time for these actions?
Example: challenge 1 Lack of assistive products available on the market	Make a list of priority products	Plan to use selected products in my daily routine	Support in identifying what is available in the market or donations to purchase or collect, if needed
Example: challenge 2 Difficulty accessing toilet or toilet chair	Raise the bed legs to be able to sit on the side of the bed to make it easier to get out of bed and transfer to the toilet chair independently	I will add this to my daily routine	Ask my caregiver or other family or friends to help me do this
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			



E. Access to appropriate public health services

List your challenge	List your solutions	How will you change your routine to make time for these actions?	How will your caregiver change his or her daily routine to make time for these actions?
Example: challenge 1 <i>Difficulty in accessing health and public health facilities</i>	<i>In my area, try to build support groups and share my concerns.</i>	<i>As I meet people in addressing challenge 2, try to discuss the issues and find supportive people to raise awareness and meet with local health professionals.</i>	<i>Make time to raise awareness of the issues within the community and contact health professionals.</i>
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			
Insert your challenge here			

ANNEXES

Annexe 1: Template self-management plan

List your challenge	List your solutions	How will you change your routine to make time for these actions?	How will your caregiver change his or her daily routine to make time for these actions?
Challenge 1			
Challenge 2			
Challenge 3			
Challenge 4			
Challenge 5			

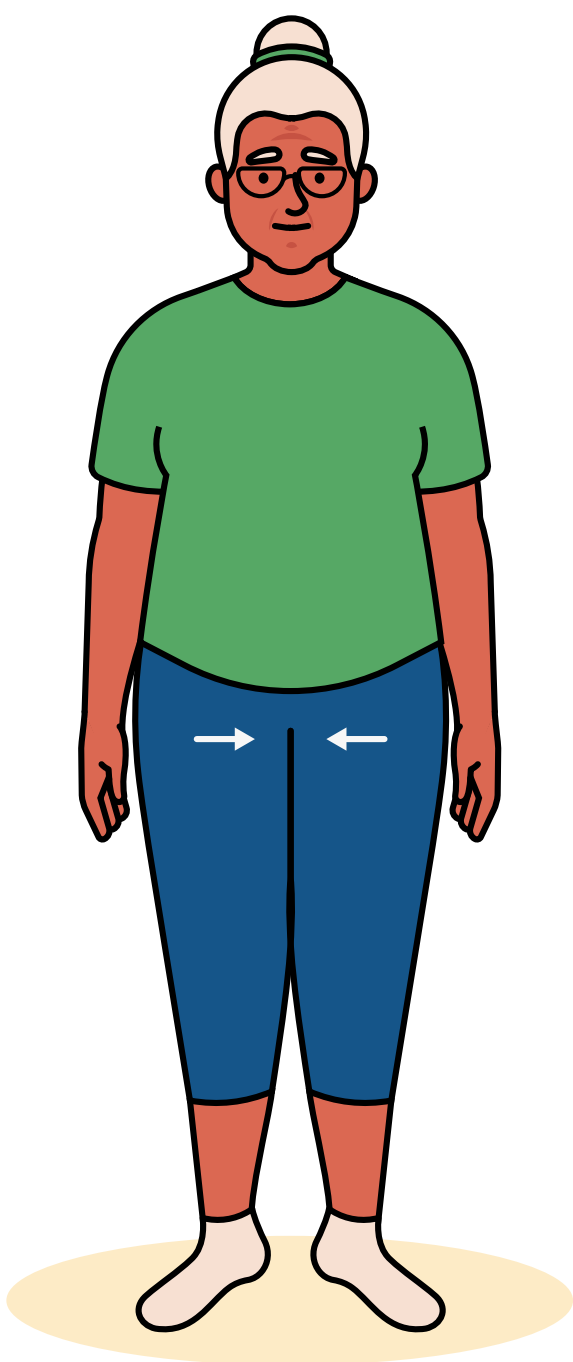
Review – after 6 to 15 weeks:

Challenge	Did the solution help?	Did the routine change and improve your daily life?	Did the new routine help you as a carer?

Annexe 2: Control exercises

What exercises can I do to control leakages of urine or faeces?

You need to do these fast and slow squeezes regularly, once a day, and at the same time if possible. It can be helpful to sing a song or listen to music while doing these exercises.



Before You Start

Sit upright on a chair or on the bed or stand up.

Try tightening your muscles really gently to feel just the muscles between your legs lifting and squeezing in.

Nothing above the belly button should tighten or tense.

Once you have found the muscles to work, you can start with the routine described below.

Step 1 – Week 1

Squeeze and relax the muscles around your anus, as if trying to stop passing wind – check if you can feel this.

Step 2 – Week 1

Then squeeze the muscles as if you are trying to stop the flow of urine halfway through – check if you can feel this.

Make sure you are not squeezing your stomach muscles or holding your breath.

Step 3 – After 3 Months

Now try to do both exercises together at the same time and hold.

You need to practise both strong and long squeezes and shorter squeezes:

1. Do 10 slow squeezes counting to 10.
2. Do 10 fast squeezes counting to 1.
3. After 20 squeezes, rest by holding for 4 counts, then start again.

Annexe 3: Home exercises for improving strength, flexibility and balance

Exercise 1

Arm and leg swing while sitting

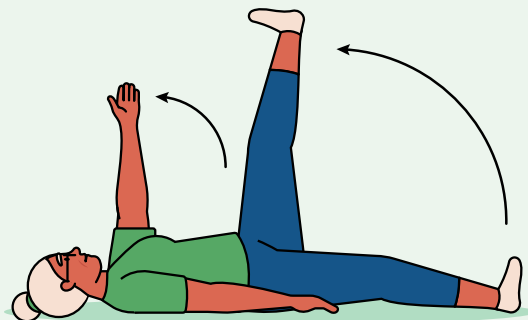
15 swings
up and down



Exercise 2

Arm and leg stretch while lying down

15 swings
up and down



Exercise 3

Side bends

10 bends on each side

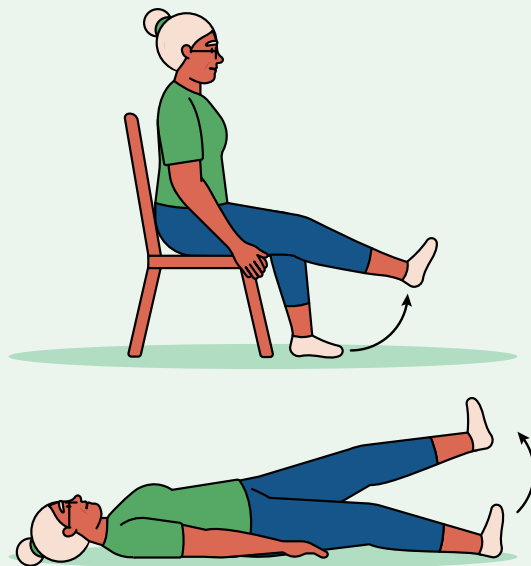


Exercise 4**Touching toes while sitting**

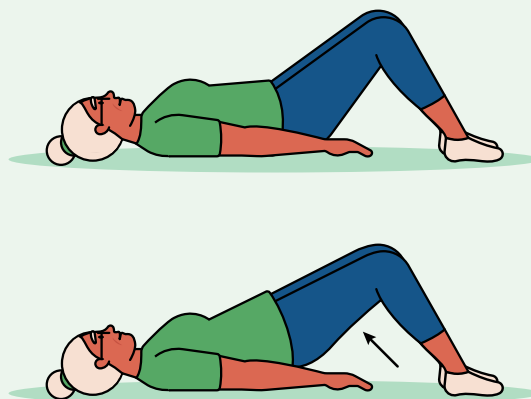
10 times bend backwards and forwards

**Exercise 5****Leg lifts while sitting or lying down**

10 leg lifts on each side

**Exercise 6****Bridge**

10 times lifting bottom off the floor



Exercise 7

**Swing with towel
while standing or sitting**

10 times swinging
one side to the other



Balance exercises to prevent falls

Exercise Series 1

Exercise 1

Single limb stance

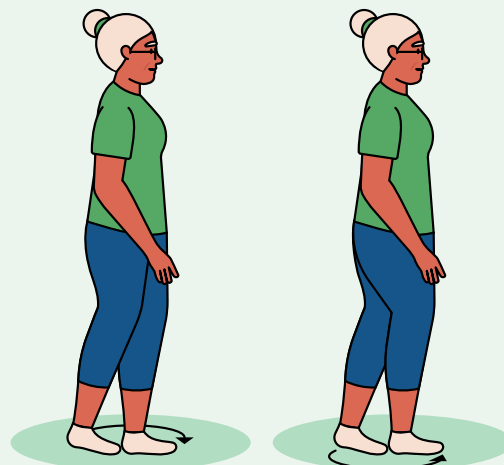
10 times



Exercise 2

Walking heel to toe

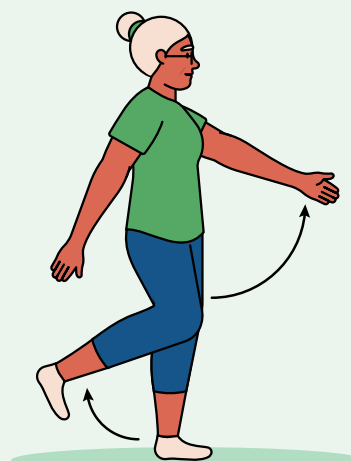
10 times



Exercise 3

Rock the boat

10 times



Exercise Series 2

Exercise 1

Clock reach

10 times



Exercise 2

Back leg raises

10 times



Exercise 3

Single limb
stance with arm

10 times



Exercise Series 3

Exercise 1

Marching in place

10 times



Exercise 2

Toe lifts

10 times



Exercise 3

Shoulder rolls

10 times



Read more: <https://www.lifeline.ca/en/resources/14-exercises-for-seniors-to-improve-strength-and-balance/>

**If the
activities have
helped, do share
with others. The tool
is aimed to increase your
personal understanding of
incontinence and provide
more information to public
health services.**

