

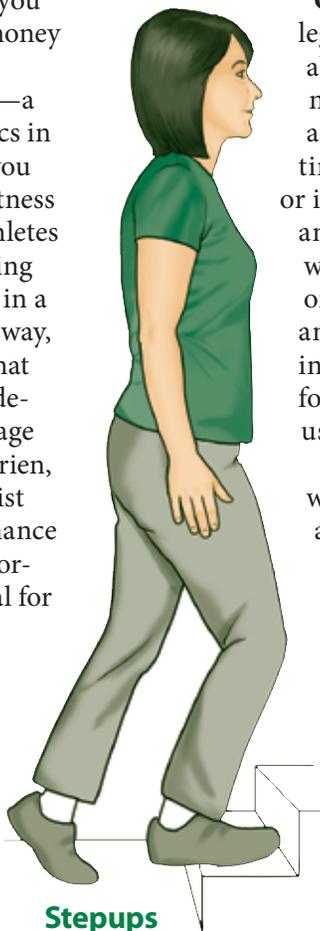
## Stay Fit with Calisthenics

To get and stay fit, you don't have to spend money on exercise classes or expensive equipment—a regimen of calisthenics in your home can help you attain most of your fitness goals. But because athletes are often depicted doing calisthenics exercises in a high-speed, vigorous way, there's a perception that the exercises are too demanding for the average person, says Josh O'Brien, an exercise physiologist in the Sports Performance Center at the Weill Cornell-affiliated Hospital for Special Surgery.

"But calisthenics simply means exercising using your own body weight, perhaps with an object in your home, like a chair. Speed isn't a requirement," he says.

However, a calisthenics workout can still be challenging, especially for older adults, who tend to have a lower strength-to-body weight ratio, he explains. Therefore, certain exercises, such as pushups, generally need to be modified for those who are less fit.

**Sample workout.** Here's a sample calisthenics workout that strengthens many of the major muscle groups. Do two sets of 10 or 15 repetitions for each exercise, working at your own pace.



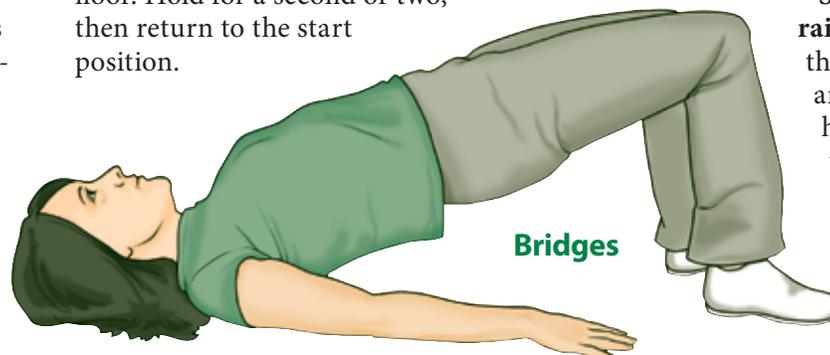
**Stepups**

**Chair squats** strengthen legs and core abdominal muscles, and help with basic activities of daily living—getting up and down from a chair, or in and out of the car, for example. Stand in front of a chair with your arms at your side or out in front of you. Sit back and down, keeping your spine in neutral position (don't bend forward); come back up without using your arms.

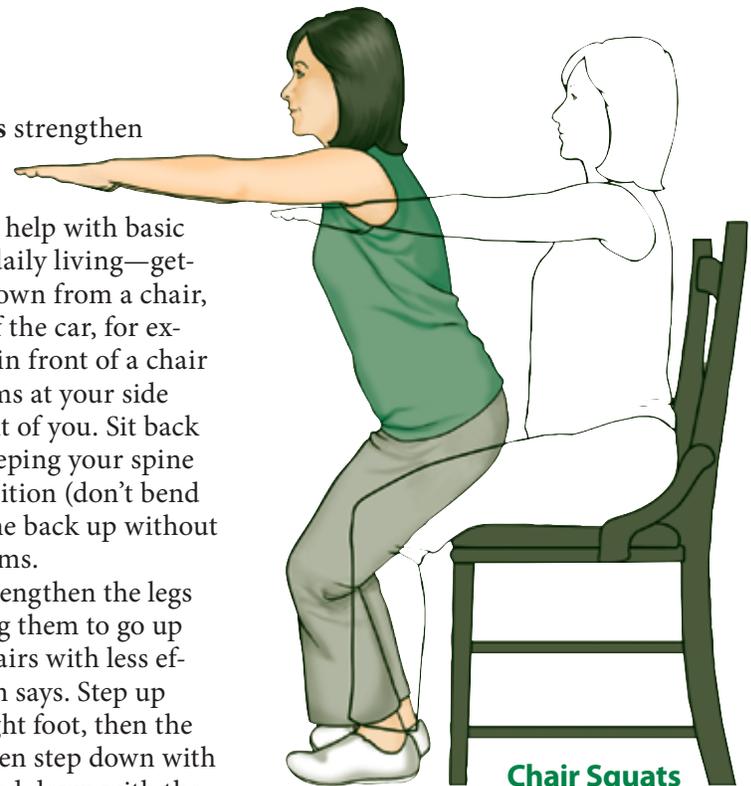
**Stepups** strengthen the legs while training them to go up and down stairs with less effort, O'Brien says. Step up with the right foot, then the left foot; then step down with the right and down with the left. Do two sets starting with the right foot, then two sets starting with the left.

**Bridges** are good for the midback and hamstring (back of the thigh) muscles. Lie on your back with your knees bent at 90 degrees.

Contract your abdominals, gluteals, and hamstring muscles, and keep the spine in a neutral position (don't arch) as you lift the pelvis up off the floor. Hold for a second or two, then return to the start position.



**Bridges**



**Chair Squats**

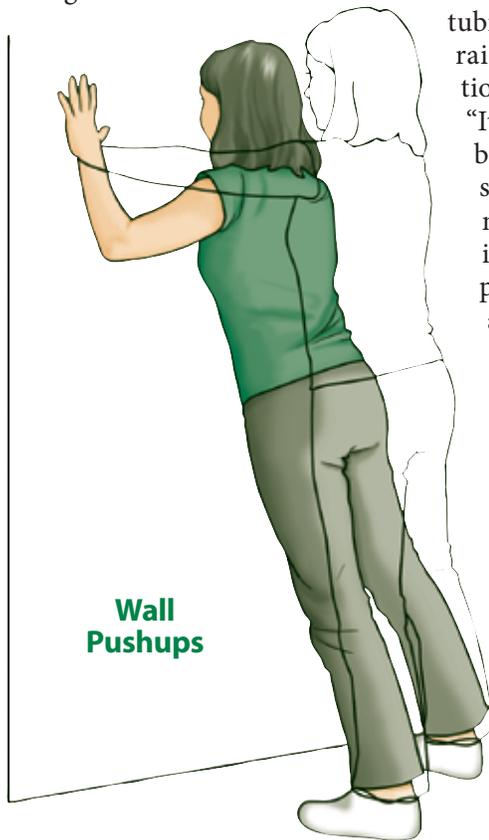
**Heel raises** strengthen your calf muscles. Stand and push your toes down into the floor as your heels rise up. Hold for a second or two and repeat. If you have trouble balancing, hold on to a chair or table. As you progress, try improving your balance by holding on first with your hand, then with a couple of fingers, then one finger, until you can stand on your toes unassisted.

**Side-lying leg raises** strengthen the muscles around the hips. Lie on your right side, supporting yourself with your left hand in front

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of you. Keep the right (lower) leg bent and the left (top) leg straight. Bring the left leg straight up several inches without shifting your pelvis, then back down to the starting position. Do two sets, and repeat on the other side.

**Wall pushups** strengthen the chest, arms, and shoulders. Place your hands shoulder-width apart on a wall. Keeping your body straight from your heels to the top of your head,



lean slowly into the wall, bending your arms. Return to start position. The farther away your feet are from the wall, the more challenging the exercise.

For the upper back, “add some resistance in the form of free weights or a rubber band or tubing” to do rows, side raises, or back retractions, O’Brien notes. “It’s too difficult to use body weight alone to strengthen these muscles, which are important for posture and many activities of daily living.” 🍌

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

*To stay fit with calisthenics:*

- Create a total body workout; ask a trained professional to review it, keeping your fitness level and any health conditions in mind.
- Modify exercises as needed, and progress slowly.
- Add resistance using free weights or resistance bands to strengthen your upper back.