

# POST-COVID-19 REHABILITATION GUIDE

*The Role of Movement in Recovering From COVID-19*



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# INTRODUCTION

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## Goals

Many post-COVID-19 patients have difficulty returning to their normal activity levels. These exercises are provided to get you started on the road to recovery. These exercises can be done at home and with minimal necessary equipment.

If you are having difficulty with these exercises, you may benefit from formal Physical, Occupational, or Speech Therapy. Discuss this at your next appointment with your doctor or our care management team.

## Overview

This guide is organized into five main sections. The first four are by the type of exercises: Breathing, Balance/Vestibular, Cardiovascular/Endurance, and Strength. The fifth main section includes strategies for preserving energy while completing daily tasks, as well as strategies for managing brain fog and staying organized.

**This return to exercise should occur no earlier than seven days after COVID-19 symptoms are no longer present.**

## Safety

When participating in the following exercises, or any return to an exercise routine, discuss with your physician. If you have difficulty staying within your physician-recommended heart rate zone or oxygen saturation levels, you should stop these exercises and rest. If you have dizziness or blurry vision, you should stop and sit down.

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# BREATHING

## Supine Diaphragmatic Breathing

**1. SETUP:** Lie on your back with your knees bent and soles of feet on the ground.

Place one hand on your stomach and one hand by your side.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Slowly breathe in through your nose and feel the hand on your stomach rise as your belly rises.

Exhale with pursed lips.

**3. DURATION:** One minute

## Seated Diaphragmatic Breathing

**1. SETUP:** Sit upright on a chair or other sturdy surface.

Place one hand on your stomach and one hand to your side.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Slowly breathe in through your nose and feel the hand on your stomach be pushed forward as your belly expands.

Exhale with pursed lips.

**3. DURATION:** One minute

# BREATHING

## Humming

**1. SETUP:** Sit upright on a chair or other sturdy surface.

Place your fingertips on the front of your neck and one hand to your side.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Slowly breathe in through your nose.

Exhale while humming and feel the vibration of the humming noise with your fingertips.

**3. DURATION:** One minute



## Yawn-to-Smile

**1. SETUP:** Sit upright on a chair or other sturdy surface.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Yawn as you stretch your hands overhead.

Lower your arms and smile for three seconds.

**3. DURATION:** One minute



## BALANCE/VESTIBULAR

Work within your safe parameters as prescribed by your physician when returning to cardiovascular exercise. Start slow and respect your fatigue levels.

### Single Leg Stance

**1. SETUP:** Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your arms to your sides. Use a counter top for safety.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Slowly lift one foot off the ground by bending one knee while keeping your upper leg perpendicular to the floor.

Hold this balanced position for as long as possible, or up to one minute.

Lower your foot back to the ground and repeat on the other side.

**3. DURATION:** Up to one minute per foot



### Tandem Stance with Chair Support

**1. SETUP:** Holding on to the back of a chair or other sturdy surface for support, stand in an upright position.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Place one foot in front of the other, touching your heel to the front of the foot behind.

Hold this position for as long as possible, or up to one minute.

**3. DURATION:** Up to one minute per foot



## BALANCE/VESTIBULAR

### Walking Tandem Stance

**1. SETUP:** Start standing with your feet hip-width apart and your arms to your sides. Use ski poles for safety.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Place one foot in front of the other, touching your heel to the front of the foot behind.

Alternate placing each foot in front of the other to walk forward.

**3. DURATION/REPS:** One minute per foot



### Sideways Walking

**1. SETUP:** Stand with your feet hip-width distance apart and your arms to your sides. Use a counter top or other sturdy surface for safety.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Move one foot to the side, widening your stance.

Move the other foot in the same direction, returning to a hip-width stance.

Continue for 30 seconds.

Repeat by leading with the other foot, going in the opposite direction.

**3. DURATION/REPS:** 30 seconds per direction



# CARDIOVASCULAR/ENDURANCE

Work within your safe parameters as prescribed by your physician when returning to cardiovascular exercise. Start slow and respect your fatigue levels.

## Standing March

- 1. SETUP:** Start standing with your feet hip-width apart and your arms to your sides. Use ski poles for safety.
- 2. MOVEMENT:** Lift one knee to the same height as your waist, making your upper leg parallel to the ground.
- 3. DURATION/REPS:** Repeat on the other side, alternating knees for one minute



## Standing Towel Folding

- 1. SETUP:** Start standing in front of a table or other sturdy surface with your feet hip-width apart and your arms to your sides.
- 2. MOVEMENT:** Engage in a task such as folding towels on the surface in front of you.
- 3. DURATION:** Continue for one minute or more — however long you can stand without needing to sit down and rest.

Continue daily and gradually increase the amount of time you can stand for, without sitting down to rest.



## Walking

Walk at a comfortable pace for five minutes without stopping. You should be able to hold a conversation at this pace.

At first, it might be necessary to stop and rest. Continue this exercise daily until you can walk for the full amount without stopping. Then, gradually increase the amount of time until you can walk for 45 minutes without stopping.

**DURATION:** 5-45 minutes



# STRENGTH

Work within your safe parameters as prescribed by your physician when returning to cardiovascular exercise. Start slow and respect your fatigue levels. If you don't have any small weights, use soup cans.

## Seated Push-Ups

**1. SETUP:** Sit upright on a chair or other sturdy surface.

Place your hands on either side of you with your fingers facing forward and palms down, resting on the surface. Your arms should be slightly bent.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Lift yourself up and off of the surface by pushing up with your arms until they are straight.

**3. DURATION:** One minute



## Breathing Bicep Curls

**1. SETUP:** Start standing with your feet hip-width apart and your arms to your sides, with a one or two-pound dumbbell in each hand.

Rotate your arms so that your palms face up and in front of you.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Slowly breathe in through your nose.

As you exhale, curl your arms up so that the dumbbells reach your shoulders.

As you inhale again, lower your arms back down, making a 90-degree angle with your arms and keeping your palms facing up.

**3. DURATION:** One minute, making sure to continue this breathing pattern





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## Breathing Shoulder Press

**1. SETUP:** Start standing with your feet hip-width apart and your arms to your sides, with a one or two-pound dumbbell in each hand.

**2. MOVEMENT:** With your palms rotated outwards and in front of you, hold the dumbbells at shoulder height.

Slowly breath in through your nose.

As you exhale, press the dumbbells overhead by straightening your arms and keeping your palms facing outwards in front of you.

As you inhale again, lower the dumbbells back down to shoulder height.

**3. DURATION:** One minute, making sure to continue this breathing pattern



## Standing Heel Raise

**1. SETUP:** Holding on to the back of a chair or other sturdy surface for support, stand in an upright position.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Breathe in slowly through your nose as you stand on your toes and lift your heels.

Lower your heels back to the ground as you exhale.

**3. DURATION:** One minute, making sure to continue this breathing pattern



## Seated Dumbbell Tricep Extension

**1. SETUP:** Sit upright on a chair or other sturdy surface.

**2. MOVEMENT:** Holding a one or two-pound dumbbell with both hands, raise both arms overhead so that they are just slightly bent.

Breathe in through your nose as you bend your arms to lower the dumbbell behind your head.

Exhale as you press the dumbbell above your head again by straightening your arms.

**3. DURATION:** One minute, making sure to continue this breathing pattern



## STRATEGIES

### Energy Conservation

These strategies may help you divide tasks up during the week or adapt how you do them to use less energy. Allow plenty of time for activities and stay within your oxygen and pulse ranges. Respect your heart rate and oxygen levels, and avoid over-exerting to allow your body to recover.

**House Cleaning:** Divide chores up into a schedule with no more than one big chore per day. Use a weekly calendar to track chores.

**Cooking:** Try to use lighter or smaller pots and pans, and cook simple meals with less steps. Wash as you go to avoid getting extra dishes out.

**Bathing:** Use a shower chair to sit while bathing. Use warm water rather than hot water for bathing, and dry off with hand towels or use a terry cloth robe to dry off.

**Dressing:** Gather all of your items at once, before you start, and remain seated while dressing. Wear loose-fitting clothes that are easy to get on and off.

### Organization Strategies

These strategies may help you to stay organized and manage brain fog.

**Use electronic reminders:** Task lists (iPhone/Android reminder applications are great for grocery lists, task lists, etc.), Alexa reminders, other task list applications, and/or setting alarms to complete tasks on basic flip phones can also be helpful!

**Use a Calendar/Schedule System:** Google or Yahoo calendar applications can be easier to visualize the month than the iPhone or Android calendar, but any calendar system is a good start. Paper calendars are also great. Some people prefer to carry a weekly/daily planner to handwrite details.

**Post-it Notes** can be helpful to stash around the house for reminders to complete tasks or to grab something before leaving the house, etc.

If everyday items are often misplaced or difficult to find, (keys, wallet, etc.), **try always placing them in the same spot every day.**

Sometimes **talking out loud** can help provide an auditory cue to help with working memory difficulties. Saying out loud “I need to take out the trash” can help you to remember to do it in a few minutes.

**Using a tote bag or backpack** when out in the community can help corral things like keys, wallet, water bottle, etc. to avoid misplacing or losing personal items.



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