



Ringling Recovery Exercises

These exercises have been designed to help to prepare bell ringers for church bell ringing after a period of inactivity, for example that caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The 37 exercises include:

- 14 flexibility exercises and stretches
- 7 leg strengthening exercises
- 11 arm strengthening exercises
- 5 balance exercises

This has been designed as a general exercise programme and is not in any way designed to meet individual needs nor does it consider individuals' abilities and limitations. Neither The Guild of Devonshire Ringers nor the author accept responsibility for any harm that may be caused during or as a result of doing these exercises. Therefore, be mindful of your individual situation and never push through any pain.

Stop immediately if you feel:

- Pain
- Dizzy
- Short of breath etc.

Always move slowly and gently and only as far as you feel is comfortable.

Some of the exercises use an exercise resistance band. A recommended brand is **THERABAND** which is readily available and inexpensive. However, it is possible to do these exercises without the resistance band, but they will be less strenuous. Please monitor your resistance band for signs of wear and tear or damage and replace it if indicated. For safety reasons, wear goggles when using an exercise band.

In addition to these exercises, it is also beneficial to remain as active as you can, within Covid-19 restrictions and guidelines. This could include walking or cycling, for example.

You should feel benefit from the exercises if you try them 2-3 times a week in preparation for a return to ringing. They may also be useful to do as 'warm up' exercises just before you intend to ring.

Flexibility exercises and stretches

These exercises are useful to maintain the range of movement required for bell ringing. They also help to 'warm up' for the strengthening exercises.

Repeat each exercise 5 times on each side of the body.

Sitting exercises:

Try these exercises sitting towards the front of a dining chair with an upright posture.

When holding a stretch, try not to 'bounce', but rather hold the stretch steady.

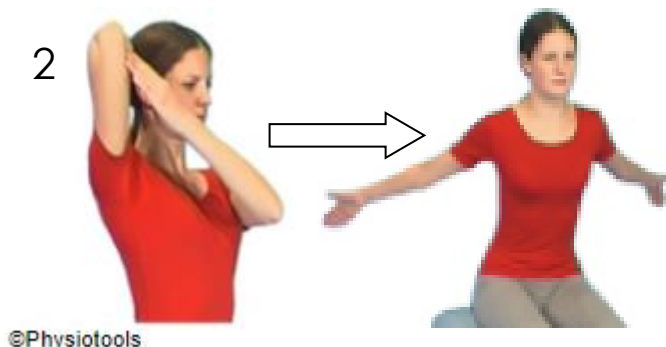
Arm exercises:

1. Gently lift your arms above your head as far as you can comfortably and stretch up towards the ceiling. Hold for 5 seconds and then gently lower your arms back down.



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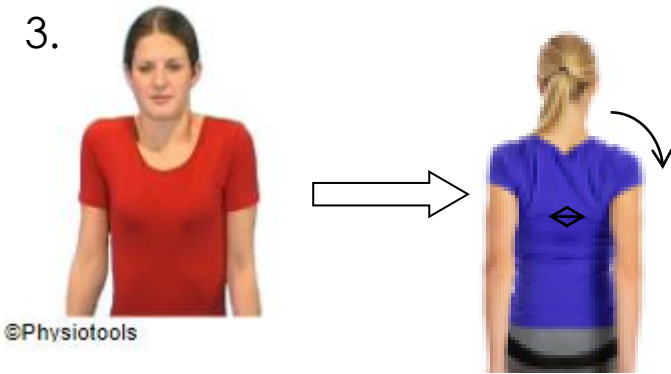


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- Gently bend your arm to touch your shoulders, then gently lift your elbow in front of you as far as you can comfortably. Use your other hand to give a gentle stretch. Hold for 5 seconds and then gently lower.

Straighten your arms as far as you can comfortably and stretch them out. Hold this position for 5 seconds and then relax.

3.



Gently shrug your shoulders. Then gently roll your shoulders backwards and downwards to squeeze your shoulder blades together. Hold for 5 seconds and then gently roll your shoulders back to a neutral position.

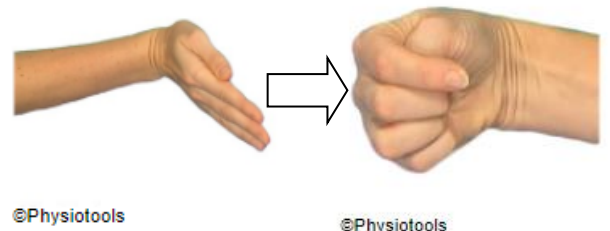
Wrist and hand exercises:

4. With your elbow held at right angles and tucked into the side of your body, gently turn your hand so that your palm faces the ceiling as far as you can comfortably. Then gently turn your hand so that your palm faces towards the floor as far as you can comfortably.



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- With your elbow held at right angles and tucked into the side of your body, gently move your wrist backwards with your fingers stretched, as far as you can comfortably. Then bend your wrist forwards and make a fist as far as you can comfortably.



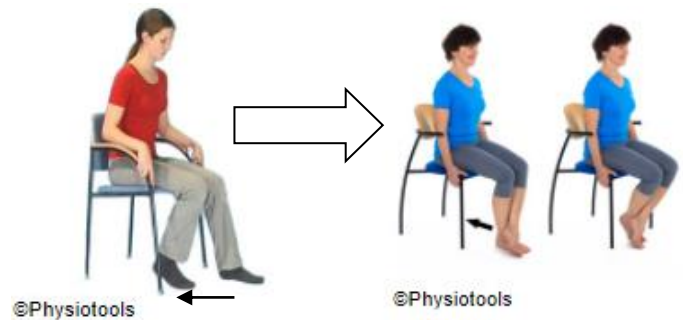
6. With your elbows held at right angles and tucked into the side of your body, gently move your hand from side to side as far as you can comfortably.



Leg exercises:

7. Bend your right knee under your chair as far as you can comfortably.
Hold for 5 seconds and then relax.

For an extra stretch, use your left leg to gently push your right lower leg back even further.



8. Straighten your left leg out in front of you with your heel gently resting on the floor. Keeping your leg straight, pull the toes on your left leg up towards you and gently bend forwards at your hips so that you feel a stretch on the back of your leg.
Hold the stretch for 10 seconds before relaxing.



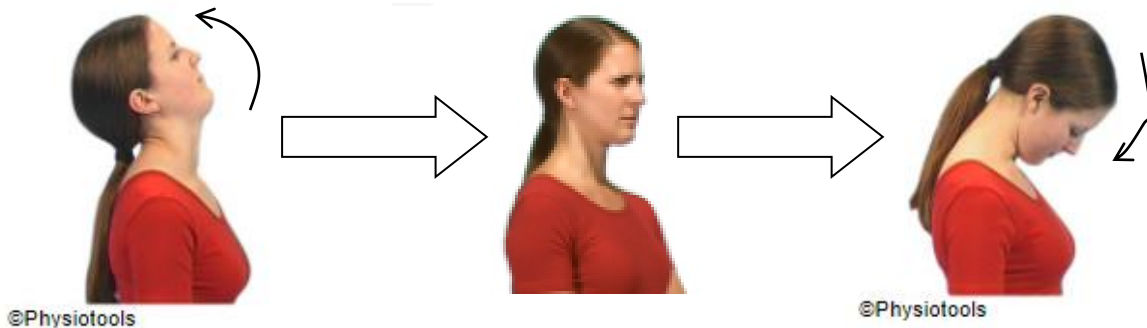
9.



Keeping your heels on the floor, tap your toes on the floor.
Try to lift your toes as far as you can comfortably.
Try this exercise 10 times.

Neck exercises:

10. Gently look up towards the ceiling as far as you can comfortably. Then slowly lower your head to look forwards. Then look down towards the floor and back to the centre.



Body exercises:

11. Hold the right side of the seat using your left hand. Gently twist your body as far as you can comfortably to the right. You can use your arms to help. Gently turn your head to look over your right shoulder as far as you can comfortably. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds before gently returning to the centre. Then repeat to the other side. Try to maintain an upright posture and try not to lean forwards during the exercise.



Standing exercises:

Try these stretches in standing:

12. Stand up straight and put your hands on your hips. Gently arch your back as far as you can comfortably. Hold for 5 seconds and then gently relax.



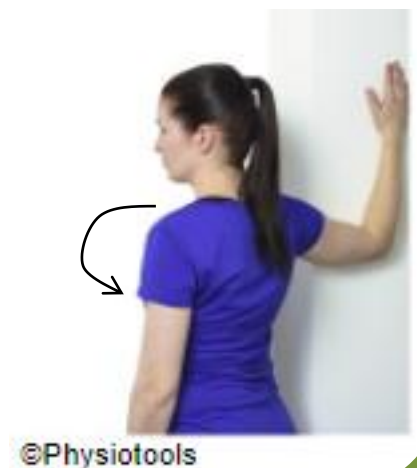
13.



Step your right foot behind you. Keeping your right leg straight (try not to let your knee bend) and both heels on the ground, gently bend your left knee until you can feel the stretch in your right calf muscles. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds.

14.

Standing in an open doorway, raise your right arm up to shoulder height with your elbow bent at 90 degrees. Rest your palm and forearm on the doorframe. Keeping standing upright and without leaning your body forwards, gently twist your body away from your arm, to the left. Feel the stretch across your chest. Hold for 10 seconds and then relax.



Leg Strengthening Exercises

These exercises are particularly useful for ringers who have many or difficult steps to access their ringing chambers.

Try each exercise 10 times, unless otherwise stated.

1. Stairs

It is a good idea to go up and down flights of stairs whenever you can, if you are able.

Going up and down steps and stairs can help to improve stamina and breathlessness, as well as strength.

Use a bannister or handrail to steady yourself if you need to.

Aim to go up and down as many steps as there are to access the ringing room at your usual tower.

2. Steps

Standing facing towards a step going upwards, place the foot of your strongest leg on to the step.

Then step up with your other leg.

Still facing upwards, place the foot of your weakest leg back on to the floor behind you (ie. backwards).

Then bring your other foot to join it.

Repeat the exercise leading with the other leg.

Hold on to a rail if you need to steady yourself.



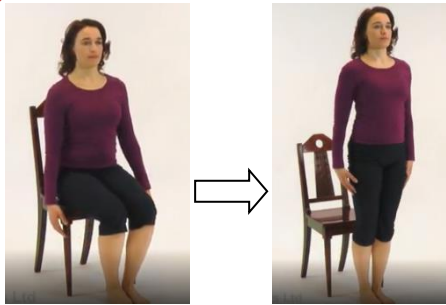
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The aim of this exercise is to strengthen your leg muscles, ready to climb those tower stairs.

Try to repeat the exercise 10 times on each leg, or aim towards repeating the exercise the number of steps to access your usual tower.

3. Quadriceps

Straighten your right leg out in front of you as far as you can comfortably, lifting your foot off the floor. Hold for 5 seconds and then gently lower. Try not to lean your body backwards during the exercise.



4. Sitting to Standing

From sitting towards the front of a chair, stand up. Try to only use one or both arms if you need to. Repeat the exercise 10 times. Try to control the movement both ways and try to sit down without making a noise.

5. Knee dips

Stand facing a kitchen worktop (or something else sturdy) and steady yourself using the worktop if needed. Keeping looking straight ahead and your body facing forwards, gently bend your knees as far as you can comfortably. Then gently push back up to straighten your legs. Try to keep your hips, knees and feet facing forwards.



6. Hip strengthening

In standing, hold on to a kitchen worktop (or something else sturdy) to steady yourself. Keeping your legs straight, gently lift your right leg out to the side as far as you can comfortably. Hold your foot off the ground for 2-3 seconds and then gently lower your leg back to the centre. Repeat with your left leg. Try to keep your body upright throughout and your hips facing forwards.



7.



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In standing, hold on to a kitchen worktop (or something else sturdy) to steady yourself. Keeping your legs straight, gently lift your right leg out behind you as far as you can comfortably, hold your foot off the ground for for 2-3 seconds and then gently bring your leg back to the centre.

Repeat with your left leg.

Try to keep your body and hips facing forwards
Try to avoid dipping your body forwards to face towards the floor or twisting your body.

These last two exercises can be made more difficult by adding resistance, such as using an exercise resistance band (eg. 'Theraband').

- Make a loop with the band and stand inside the loop with the band around your ankles.
- Use the band with the highest level of resistance that you can manage.
- As you become stronger, gradually progress to using an exercise band with a higher resistance level.



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Arm Strengthening Exercises

These exercises are to prepare your arms for ringing a bell again.

Some of the exercises involve using an exercise resistance band (eg. 'Theraband'). In most cases, use the strongest resistance band that you can manage. The exercises can be made more difficult by gradually holding the band with your hands closer together or progressing to the next level of resistance band.

Some of the exercises involve using a bottle of water. To begin with, use an empty bottle, then gradually progress the exercises by adding more water to the bottle, making it heavier.

Try each exercise 5-10 times on each side.

Standing exercises:

1. Wall press-ups

Stand facing a wall at about an arm's length away.

Place both of your hands flat on the wall at shoulder height.

Gently bend your elbows and lean your body towards the wall.

Then slowly push your elbows back to a straight position.

This exercise is good for arm strength but also to improve 'proprioception' in your arms – this is the body's way of knowing where joints are in space without needing to look at them – which is useful for ringing church bells.



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2. 'Bell ringing'

Using a light resistance exercise band (yellow or red colour 'Theraband'), hold one end of the band in your left hand. Raise your left hand above your head with your arm straight.

Grab hold of the band with your right hand about 10-15cm away from your left hand.

Pull the band downwards with your right hand until your arm is straight down in front of you and the exercise band is stretched, like you are ringing a bell.

Try to bring your right hand down in the centre of your body rather than out to the side.

The action is like you are ringing a bell – so if you usually do a 'flick of the wrist' at the end of your pull, then do so now! Then swap sides.

The aim of this exercise is to improve arm stamina, therefore use a lower resistance band and repeat the exercise lots of times (up to 5040 times and you've 'rung' a peal... but start with a short touch and build up to a peal!).



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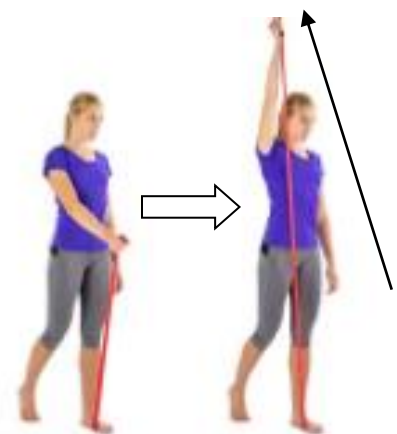
3. Biceps strengthening

Hold one end of the exercise resistance band under your left foot.

Hold the band with your right hand, and then pull your right hand upwards towards the ceiling, so that the band is stretched.

Hold for 5 seconds and then relax.

Then swap sides.



4. Triceps strengthening

Using a kitchen worktop (or something sturdy) to steady yourself using one hand, bend forwards at your hips.

Holding your other elbow at right angles and tucked into the side of your body, hold a bottle of water in this hand.

Keeping your elbow tucked in, gently and slowly bend and straighten your arm.



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Sitting exercises:

5. 'Scapula setting'

A lot of shoulder stability comes from ensuring that the muscles surrounding your scapula (shoulder blade) are strong. This exercise aims to strengthen these muscles.

Gently roll your shoulders backwards and downwards and squeeze your shoulder blades together.

Hold for 5 seconds and then relax.



6 Triceps and Biceps strengthening:



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Hold a bottle of water in your hand with your arm straight and at the side of your body.

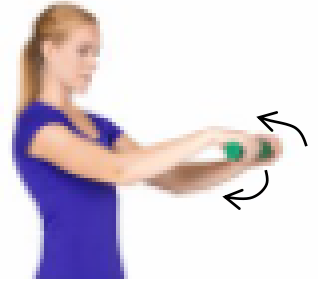
Gently bend your elbow so that the bottle touches your shoulder.

Then gently straighten your arm back to the starting position.

It is important that you move slowly and gently and control the movement in both directions.

Wrist strengthening

7. Make a sausage shape out of a tea towel. Holding the towel horizontally, grip the towel with both hands towards the centre and twist your hands in opposite directions.
Try 5-10 times in each direction.



8. Hold a bottle of water in your right hand. Turn your hand so that your palm, and the bottle, face the ceiling. Then turn your hand so that your palm, and the bottle, face towards the floor.

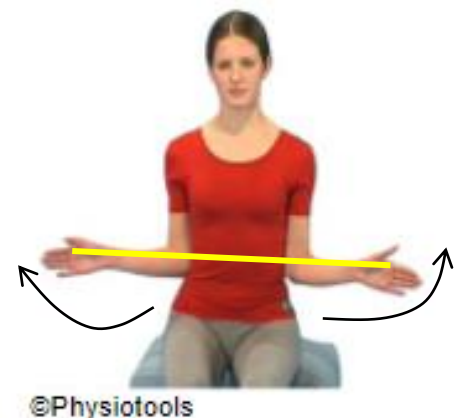


9. Holding your bottle of water in your right hand so that the bottle is the 'correct' way up, move your hand so that you are 'shaking' the bottle in slow motion.



10. Shoulder strengthening

Hold the resistance band in both hands with your palms facing upwards and your elbows tucked into your sides. Hold the band with about 10-15cm of band between your hands. Keeping your elbows tucked into the side of your body, gently pull your hands away from each other as far as you can comfortably. The exercise band should become stretched. Try to squeeze your shoulder blades together at the same time. Gently relax back to the starting position.



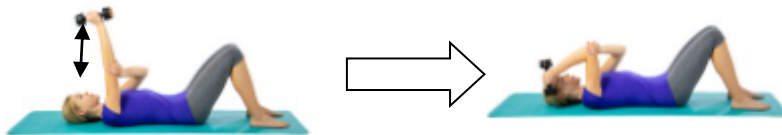
These muscles are not the strongest in your body, and so a lower resistance exercise band may be sufficient to challenge these muscles.

Lying on your back:

11. Triceps strengthening

Lying on your back, raise one arm up so that it is pointing towards the ceiling. Slowly bend your elbow to touch your forehead.

Then straighten your arm as far as you can so that you are reaching up towards the ceiling again.



It is important to move slowly and in a controlled way in both directions. Once you can do that, try the exercise holding a bottle of water and gradually increase the weight.

Balance Exercises

It is beneficial to have a good degree of static and dynamic balance when ringing. These exercises are designed to challenge your balance and prepare you for ringing again.

As these exercises challenge balance, if you are at risk of falling please take precautions such as using something sturdy (eg. a kitchen worktop) to steady yourself or do not attempt these exercises.

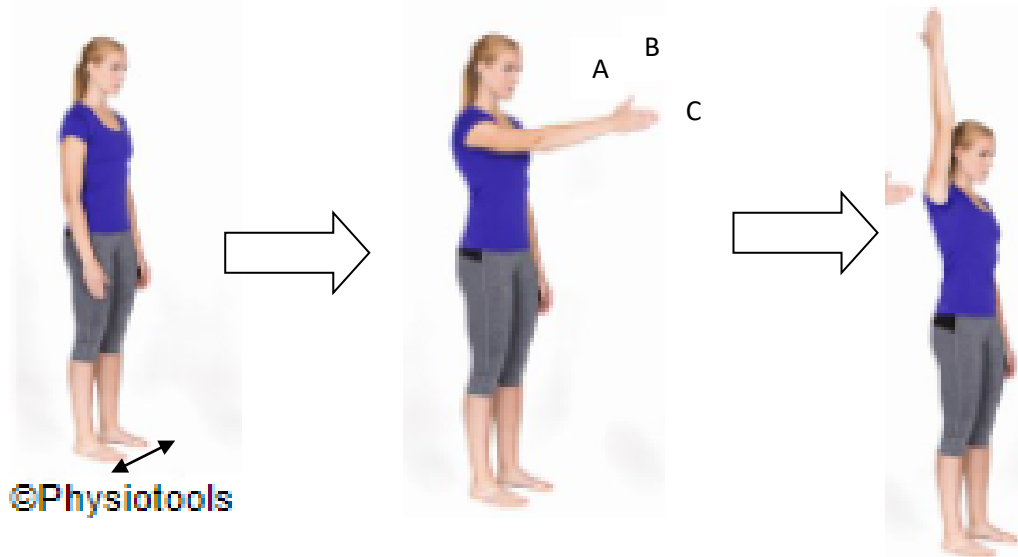
Begin by holding on to the kitchen worktop using both hands to steady yourself. As your balance improves, steady yourself only using one hand, and then to without touching the worktop at all.

Always have something nearby that you can use to steady yourself if needed, for example a kitchen worktop.

1. Standing with your feet together, gently lift your arms up in front of you, then, using a pointed finger, write the alphabet in the air.

Then lift your arms up so that they point towards the ceiling, before gently lowering your arms back down to your side.

This exercise will also help to prepare for having to mentally concentrate at the same time as maintaining balance during ringing.

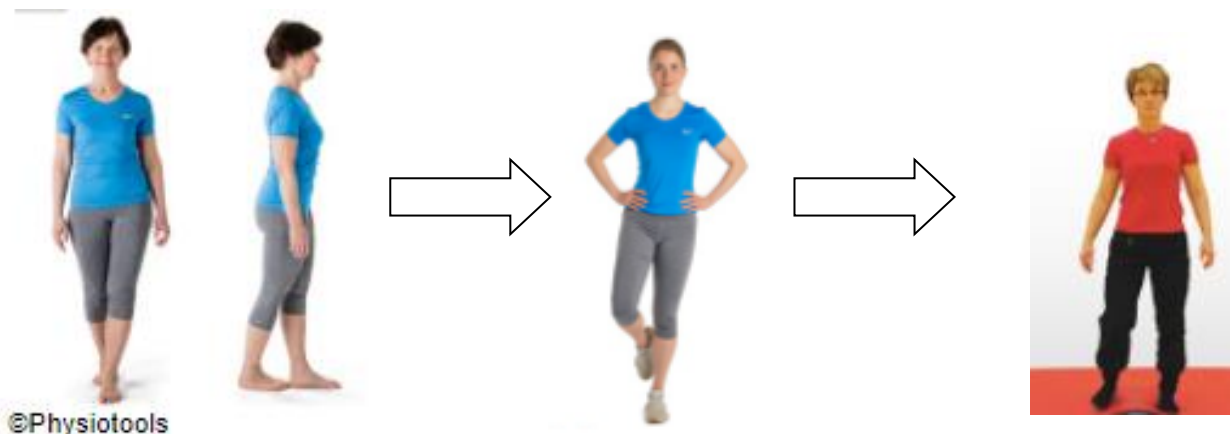


You can make this exercise more difficult by:

- Attempting the exercise with your feet placed one in front of the other (try with your right foot in front of your left and then vice-versa)
- Trying the exercise standing on one leg (try on both legs)
- Attempting to write the alphabet in reverse
- Attempting the exercise with your eyes closed
- Standing on a cushion or pillow

Only attempt to progress the exercise using one of the above suggestions at a time!

Try the exercise 3 times.



2. Stand with your feet together, gently turn your head to look over one shoulder. Gently return your head to the centre to look forwards and then gently turn your head to the other side. Slowly bring your head back to looking forwards.



You can make this exercise more difficult by:

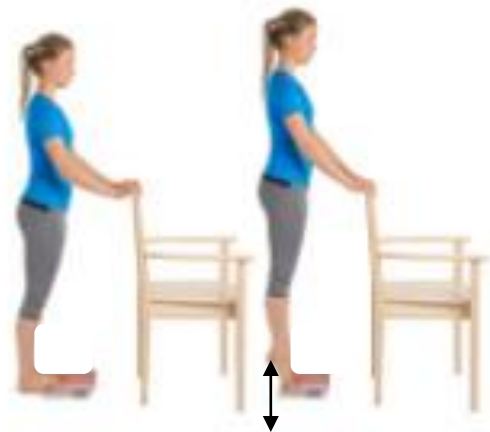
- Trying it with your feet one in front of the other (try your feet both ways)
- Trying it standing on one leg (try with both legs)
- Attempting the exercise with your eyes closed
- Standing on a cushion or pillow

Only progress this exercise using one of the above suggestions at a time!

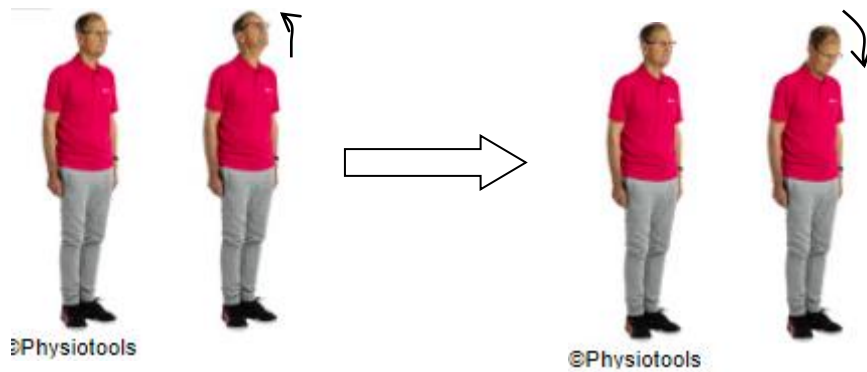
Try this exercise 5 times.

3. In standing, come up on to your tip toes, then gently lower back down.

Try this 10 times.



4. Standing with your feet together, slowly look up towards the ceiling as far as you can comfortably.
Return to looking straight ahead and then look down towards the floor.



This exercise can be made more difficult by:

- Trying it with your eyes closed
- Standing on one leg (try both legs)
- Standing with one foot in front of the other (try both ways)
- Standing on a cushion or pillow

Only progress the exercise using one of these suggestions at a time.

Try this exercise 5 times.

5. Standing on the spot with your feet together, imagine you are standing in the centre of a clock face.

Step your right foot in front of you to the 12 o'clock position and then back to the centre.

Then step your right foot to the:

- 3 o'clock
- 6 o'clock
- 11 o'clock
- 1 o'clock
- 5 o'clock
- 7 o'clock positions

Then step your left foot to the:

- 12 o'clock
- 9 o'clock
- 6 o'clock
- 5 o'clock
- 7 o'clock
- 11 o'clock
- 1 o'clock positions

Remember to return to the starting position between each step.

Repeat the exercise 3 times.

To make this exercise more difficult you could:

- Mix up the order you step in
- Increase the speed of stepping

This exercise will also help to improve the strength in your lower body bones.

It is hoped that these exercises will give you more confidence that you can return to ringing church bells.

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