

# Choose More Movement: Assess Your Physical Fitness



Most Americans don't move enough despite proven benefits, such as the reduced risk of some cancers and chronic diseases, improved bone health and cognitive function, weight control, and overall quality of life. The good news is that with [regular physical activity](#) you can prevent and improve many chronic conditions.

The goal of this at-home self-assessment is to get you thinking about your level of fitness. It features six exercises to gauge your flexibility, balance, strength, and cardiovascular capacity. These exercises are inspired by evidence-based testing used by physical therapists.

The assessment is not meant to replace a formal evaluation by a physical therapist. If you have an injury or condition that limits your movement or want to take your fitness to the next level, a physical therapist can help. Physical therapists are movement experts who improve quality of life through hands-on care, patient education, and prescribed movement. Visit [ChoosePT.com](#) to [find a physical therapist](#) in your area and additional tips and resources.

## Instructions

Measure your completion of each exercise below by: able to do, able to do partially (but may need support or modifications), or unable to do. Do not attempt any of these exercises on your own if they seem too challenging or if you have a preexisting condition or another health issue that may impact your safety. These exercises should not cause pain. If you experience pain, stop, and make a note of it. If you're unable to do an exercise, take note and don't be alarmed.

## Materials Needed

Stopwatch or timer, smartphone or other step counter, straight-backed chair, mat or rug.

## Exercises

### 1. Flexibility | Apley's Scratch Test

**Primary purpose:** To check the flexibility in your shoulders.

**Instructions:** Start by reaching your right arm overhead and behind your neck to touch your upper back. Lift your left arm and move it around your left side to your lower back, then slowly reach upward as far as possible toward your right hand. Do they touch, or are they close to touching? Are they overlapping? Does one side feel tighter than the other? Switch sides and note your results.

Able to do       Able to do partially       Unable to do

### 2. Flexibility | Seated Sit and Reach

**Primary purpose:** To check the flexibility of your hamstring and lower back.

**Instructions:** Sit on the edge of a chair, which can be placed next to a wall or sturdy surface, like a counter, for safety. Stretch out your right leg with the foot flexed. Bend your left leg with your foot flat on the floor. Placing one hand on the other, reach as far down the right leg as you can toward your toes. Keep your back straight, head up, and hold for two seconds. Switch sides and note your results.

Able to do       Able to do partially       Unable to do

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3. **Balance** | Timed Single Leg Stance (30 seconds)

**Primary purpose:** To check your balance and coordination.

**Instructions:** Stand upright, barefoot, with feet close together. Have a stable surface nearby, like a counter, that you can grab if you start to feel unbalanced. Cross your arms over your chest, then begin to lift one foot off the ground without touching it with your other foot or leg. Aim to hold for 30 seconds, if possible, then switch sides and note your results.

Able to do       Able to do partially       Unable to do

4. **Lower Body Strength** | Timed Sit To Stand (30 seconds)

**Primary purpose:** To check your lower body strength.

**Instructions:** Using a freestanding, straight-backed chair with no armrests, sit with knees at 90 degrees and feet parallel and hip-distance apart. Your back does not need to be completely against the back of the chair. With arms folded, stand up fully, allowing the legs to straighten without pressing the back of your legs against the chair for support. Sit back down, touching your buttocks to the chair. Repeat and do as many as you can in 30 seconds, and note your results.

Able to do       Able to do partially       Unable to do

5. **Core strength** | Timed Partial Sit Up Test (one minute)

**Primary purpose:** To check your core strength.

**Instructions:** Lay down on an exercise mat, or a rug, with knees bent at 90 degrees and heels and feet flat on the floor. Your arms must be straight and parallel to the spine, and your hands must be touching the mat. Raise your head and shoulders and slide the hands forward toward the end of the mat in a partial sit-up position and hold. Record your time, with the goal of holding for one minute.

Able to do       Able to do partially       Unable to do

6. **Cardio** | 6-Minute Walk

**Primary purpose:** To check your cardiovascular capacity and endurance.

**Instructions:** Walk six minutes at a brisk pace; this may be a long time to walk for some people, so you may be exerting yourself, get out of breath, or become tired. You're allowed to slow down, stop, or rest if necessary. If you stop, continue timing and resume walking as soon as you are able. Complete the walk either inside or outside, wherever you feel most safe. If you can't get outside and don't have access to a treadmill, you can modify inside by setting up a 12-meter track (approximately 39 feet), or distance that works in your setting, and count the laps and any remaining steps (or use a smartwatch or smartphone app to capture your distance). Remember, the aim is to walk as far as possible. Do not jog or run.

Able to do       Able to do partially       Unable to do