



## FIND A TRAINER

[Special Strong](#) > Top 10 Wheelchair Exercises for People in Wheelchairs

Explore our Top 10 Wheelchair Exercises for people in wheelchairs. Enhance your fitness level, boost mental health, and improve overall well-being with our carefully tailored, adaptable and inclusive wheelchair exercises. Discover new ways to stay active and empowered within your abilities!

One of the best methods to maintain your health and fitness while using a wheelchair is to engage in wheelchair exercises.

If being in a wheelchair does not keep you from getting around, it definitely should not stop you from being your fittest self!

Getting fit may be the last thing in your mind because of the limited mobility that a wheelchair offers. The good news is that there are some exercises you can do while you're in your wheelchair. These wheelchair exercises can help you do a number of things like:

- *build strength, endurance and flexibility,*
- *lose weight,*
- *decrease joint or muscle pains,*
- *prevent injury,*
- *improve range of motion, and*
- *get your muscles toned.*

All in all, exercising even while in a wheelchair can help improve your health.

Are you ready?

Here they are:

## **Get fit with these Top 10 Wheelchair Exercises**

### **1. Arm Raises**

Since being in a wheelchair requires the constant use of your arms, you need to perform an exercise that targets this body part.

Arm raises are a good exercise to start with your wheelchair exercise because it's easy and you can add weights for strength training.

Here's how:

1. Hold a small handheld weight or a medicine ball to your chest.
2. Keeping your arms straight, raise it over your head.
3. Afterwards, bend your arms and go back to your original position.
4. Do this for 12 to 15 reps.
5. For better strength training of the arms, you can add more weights. Just make sure that you don't strain your arms too much from holding too much weight.

## **2. Side Twists Wheelchair Exercises**

Another good exercise for people in wheelchairs is side twists.

All you need is your body and you can strengthen your core by doing the following:

1. Sit straight in your wheelchair.

2. Twist your body first on the left (or the right if you prefer it).
3. Go back to your original position then twist your body on the other side.
4. Do this for at least 12 to 15 reps.

### **3. Medicine Ball Criss-Cross**

This is a cross of the first two exercises, arm raises and side twists.

Only this time, you need a medicine ball in your hands or a 10-20-pound ball, whichever works for you.

Here's how you can do this exercise:

1. Sit straight then lift the medicine ball above your head.
2. Lean over to one side.
3. Bring the medicine ball down across your body so that it's across the opposite hip. This only means that if you leaned to the right while doing Step #2, your medicine ball should be over by your left hip.
4. Just repeat this routine with the opposite hip (right hip, left lean) and vice versa.
5. Do this for at least 5 reps or more if you feel up to it.

One of the benefits of this workout is that it not only strengthens your arm muscles, it also works out your core strength and abs!

#### *A helpful reminder when using weights*

Weights should be used with care and proper guidance. That is to say, weights should be challenging, but not straining. Start with smaller weights then move on to heavier weights as you build strength and endurance.

If you think you're still not strong enough, it's okay. The more you exercise, the stronger you'll get. The stronger you are, the more you'll be able to graduate to heavier weights.

## **4. Aeroplane Arms**

This exercise is like child's play. But it's actually helpful in building your arms' strength.

Here's how you can do this:

1. Sit straight in your wheelchair. Make sure you keep your back straight.
2. Extend your arms straight out on your sides.

3. Starting slow, create circular movements with your arms. You can start with small circular movements if your arms tire out easily before moving to bigger circular movements.
4. Aim for at least 20 reps, first going clockwise and counterclockwise or vice versa.

## **5. Sitting Bicycle Crunches**

If you're up for a more challenging exercise, then this is perfect for you.

Here's how you can do it:

1. Sit with your back straight.
2. Put your palms together in your chest as if you're about to tell a yoga teacher, "Namaste."
3. Angle your forearms so that they're parallel to your lap.

Take note: If it helps with your balance, you can interlace your fingers instead of just resting your palms together.'

4. Twist your body so that your right elbow touches your left knee.
5. Straighten up to your original position.

6. Twist your body again, but this time use the opposite elbow touching your opposite knee.

7. Do this for at least 5-8 reps.

This exercise not only works out your abs but also your obliques!

**Read some more:** [Top 3 Wheelchair Exercises for Special Needs](#)

## **6. Knee or Toe Lifts Wheelchair Exercises**

You may be in your wheelchair but developing leg strength is still important. If you still have some mobility in your legs, you can do knee lifts to build strength in your legs.

You can do this simply by lifting your knees up as high as you can.

Depending on where you are in your strength training, you can either hold this position for as long as you can. If you can't do this, you can do reps of knee lifts.

If you're not able to lift your knees, you can do toe lifts instead.

Here's how:

1. Lift the toes of your right (or left) foot while keeping the other flat on the floor.
2. Hold the position for 3-5 seconds.
3. Lower your toes then repeat the process on your other toe.
4. Do this for at least 10-15 reps.

If you're not able to move your legs at all, you can still increase blood flow and strengthen your legs by moving them with your arms.

Bend down and touch your toes. Grab them firmly and lift them in reps or hold them up for as long as you can. The choice is up to you. You can also do the same thing by bending down and grabbing your knees.

## **7. Chest Stretch**

Next on our list of wheelchair exercises is the chest stretch.

Since you spend most of your time sitting down, maintaining a good and proper posture is still a must.

Sitting on a wheelchair does not make use of your back muscles which can make it weaker over time due to inactivity. The repeated motion of pushing your wheelchair also means that your chest and shoulder muscles can become sore or stiff.



Sore or stiff muscles can lead to injury. This is why it's a good idea to exercise your chest and your back with a bit of stretching every day to help prevent injury.

Here's how you can do this exercise:

1. Sit upright in your wheelchair. Make sure that your back is not touching the backrest of your chair.
2. Extend your arms out on your side then pull your shoulders back.
3. Gently and slowly push your chest forward until you feel your chest muscles stretching.
4. Hold the position for 5 to 10 seconds to avoid straining.
5. Repeat this for at least 5 reps.

Doing this exercise every day can give be very good to keep your posture straight and strong.

## **8. Engage in some wheelchair sports.**

You may be thinking it's impossible, but people in wheelchairs can still be active by playing sports.

Some sports like basketball, badminton and netball are just some of the holistic exercises that you can try.

Playing any of these can improve your cardiovascular endurance and strengthen your muscles.

## **9. Arm Bike Machine**

If you need a good dose of cardio exercise without hurting your knees or your legs, arm bike machines would be a great option.

Also known as an upper-body ergometer, the arm bike exercises the muscles in your arms, back, shoulders and even your core. You can consider it a packaged workout since it helps you develop strength while at the same time strengthen your heart and your lungs.

This helps you save time doing two types of [wheelchair workouts](#) at the same time.

All you have to do is sit on the arm bike machine and get your heart pumping after 10-20 minutes.

Gyms like Special Strong offers more exercise machines like this for people on wheelchairs. If you want to start on your fitness journey even on a wheelchair, you can get your pass [here](#) to get access for 7 days.

## 10. Stretch out!

Stretching may look too simple to be considered an exercise. But stretching is very important before and after you do any type of wheelchair exercise.

In fact, stretching improves your mobility and also helps with flexibility.

You can stretch your arms, your legs, and even your neck. Move your arms back and forth. Shake your wrist or your fingers. Just remember to be gentle when you do stretches.

## Wheelchair Exercise: Empowering Wellness in Limited Mobility

For individuals with limited mobility, engaging in regular physical activity can be challenging but remains crucial for overall well-being. Wheelchair exercise provides a powerful solution, offering a range of

activities tailored to individuals using wheelchairs. These exercises not only enhance physical fitness but also contribute to mental health, increased flexibility, and improved cardiovascular function. From seated strength training to adaptive cardio workouts, wheelchair exercises empower individuals to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle, breaking barriers and promoting inclusivity in the realm of fitness. Discover the transformative benefits of wheelchair exercise and embark on a journey to enhance both physical and mental vitality.

“Wheelchair Exercise: Empowering Wellness in Limited Mobility” shines a light on the inclusivity and adaptability in fitness. It propels a healthy lifestyle for those with physical limitations, providing an avenue to stay active and fit. This transformative approach counteracts the challenges confronted by individuals with mobility constraints. The benefits of wheelchair exercise extend beyond enhanced physical well-being, offering a sense of independence and empowerment. Wheelchair exercises include strength training, cardio, dance, and even yoga, each designed to enhance muscle flexibility, boost cardiovascular function, and nurture mental health. Embrace this unique celebration of adaptability, stamina, and resilience, redefining barriers in fitness. Properly monitored and executed wheelchair exercise programs are instrumental in improving the overall quality of life of individuals with limited mobility.

## **Wheelchair Exercises Reduces Stress and Anxiety**

Wheelchair exercise has been found to be effective in reducing stress and anxiety levels in individuals with mobility limitations. Regular

exercise has been a proven method of reducing stress and anxiety in the general population, and the same benefits can be achieved through wheelchair exercise.



Engaging in physical activity releases endorphins, which are natural chemicals in the body that help improve mood and reduce stress. This is especially important for individuals with mobility limitations, as they may experience higher levels of stress and anxiety due to their decreased ability to move freely.

Wheelchair exercise can provide a range of benefits for both physical and mental health. It can help improve cardiovascular health, increase muscular strength and endurance, improve flexibility, and improve overall mood. Regular exercise can also lead to better sleep, which can further reduce stress and anxiety.

There are many different types of wheelchair exercises that can be done to achieve these benefits, including strength training, cardio exercises, and stretching routines. It is important to consult with a healthcare professional or a certified exercise specialist to develop a safe and effective exercise program tailored to individual needs and capabilities.

At [Special Strong](#), we believe fitness should be accessible to everyone.

Our personal trainers are not only passionate about health and nutrition. They're also particularly passionate about teaching those with special needs on how to improve their health and reach their fitness goals. With Special Strong, "healthy" is never too far away! Sign up for [private training](#) sessions with a licensed professional or one of

our [local group classes](#). If you want to try us out without committing to regular payments just yet, sign up for our free [7-day pass](#)!

*Special Strong provides [adaptive fitness](#) for children, adolescents, and adults with mental, physical and cognitive challenges. Start your own Special Strong [gym franchise](#) today and create a lasting impact on your community.*