

(Wellness Tips Ezine) How many ways can you get up from the floor?



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In order to maintain our ability to participate in the physical activities we enjoy throughout life and to keep leg, hip and back pain away, we need to be able to get up off the floor at least three different ways.

From a physical ability perspective, the toilet was a dastardly invention. We are designed to poop by squatting right down to the ground, so before the toilet, from the time we learned to squat poop as a child until the time we died, we had the flexibility and strength to do so. We pooped often enough to keep ourselves adequately limber to squat low, and strong enough to easily get up from that position.

Now a-days many of us stop getting down onto the floor altogether once the kids are past the toddler age. The chair is about as close to the floor as we get. Then some years later we find ourselves on the floor for some reason or another, like looking for something that rolled under the sofa, and we realize that getting up off the floor is suddenly quite hard work.

In those intervening months or years of no floor time, our leg muscles have tightened up to the point that we can't bend our knees, ankles or toes as far as we used to, and we have lost the strength to easily get up from the floor. So we rely on our arms to either pull ourselves up onto the furniture, or we push our hands down on our thighs to get our trunk up.

And then the grandkids come along, and we want to be able to crawl around the floor with them like we did with our kids, but somehow the effort is too much. We attribute it to ageing and accept this as an inevitable part of life, and we try and keep up with the grandkids while staying on our feet. But for some, even that is challenging, as the knees, hip or back hurts.

The question is whether the knee, hip, or back pain is the reason for the lack of ability or whether the lack of ability is the reason for the knee, hip or back pain. More frequently than is acknowledged, the lack of ability in terms of flexibility and strength is the underlying cause of the pain.

If the pain came on gradually as opposed to a sudden trauma such as a car accident or fall, it is quite possible and even likely that the pain is due to being too tight and/or too weak.

Interestingly enough, if one is flexible enough to squat right to the ground and stay there comfortably, it is easier to recruit the correct muscles in the right order when getting up, which would reduce the chances of getting low back, hip and knee pain.

One of the biggest mistakes well-meaning adult children do is move their parents out of a home that has stairs into a home that does not, thinking that a stair-free environment will be easier on them.

But having stairs keeps one able to do stairs, and once there are no stairs to climb on a regular basis, the ability to climb stairs is lost. Soon stepping up or down a curb becomes a problem, and getting into or out of cars is impossible without help. And so the life closes down even further.

This gradual loss of function is not an inevitable part of ageing and can be avoided all together. The saying "If you don't use it you'll lose it" is true, but so is its opposite, "If you use it you will regain it." The miracle of our bodies is that with consistent, appropriate daily practice targeted to one's current ability, function can be regained.

I believe everyone should be able to get up from lying on their back on the floor in at least three ways. They are listed here from easiest to hardest:

1. Bend technique: Rolling onto the belly, pushing up onto all 4s, lifting the knees off the floor and using the hands on the floor to push the hips back until the heels are down, and rag-dolling up to standing.
2. Squat technique: Doing a full sit up, pushing oneself forward onto the feet into a low squat, and standing up by pushing the feet into the floor, and keeping the chest higher than the hips at all times.

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If age were the reason, everyone would have the same movement problems at the same age.

Is pain the reason for the lack of ability or is lack of ability the reason for pain?

Often pain is due to being too tight or too weak.

Our muscles have tightened up so we can't bent our knees, reach our arms or twist as far as we used to.

We lose strength because we are not using full range of motion anymore.

The expression "If you don't use it you will lose it" is true.

But so is its opposite. "If you use it again you will regain it."

The miracle of our bodies is that function can be restored and maintained.

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3. Lunge technique: Getting onto the knees, lifting one foot forward, pushing through the whole front foot and back toes to stand up. One should be able to do this on both legs.

In my experience, many people are impaired in their ability to do the squat and lunge technique due to a lack of flexibility in the hips, knees, ankles and toes. Many don't have the strength in the abdominals to do even one full sit up from the floor in order to get into the squat position, and many don't have the strength in the buttocks and legs to push up to standing from the floor without using the arms. I've seen this in people in their early 20s, so this is not only a problem for those in middle age and beyond.

For some people there are good reasons why certain techniques should not be practised (if you have an acute disk problem, the bend pattern and the very bottom of the squat may be problematic for example), so see your doctor for clearance.

Then hire a trainer who can help you stretch your tight muscles and strengthen you to the point you can do these movements effortlessly. And watch how your life expands!

If you are in the Vancouver BC area, [come see us!](#) Our specialty is increasing range of motion and strength so you can do the things you want to do.

I would love to hear from you. Are there activities or body positions that you are struggling with that you would like to get better at? Kneeling to garden? Reaching up to get something out of high cupboards? Putting your socks on? Chin ups? If you had better flexibility or strength, would you be better at your sport? Like your golf swing?

Please do let me know!. Reply to this email, or let me know as a comment on my [blog](#). Thank you so much!

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