

Hop, skip and jump

Dynamic power is the focus of this fitness session with chartered physio *Sarah Claridge* – to hone your muscles for rising trot, the two-point canter and landing after a fence

LOCKDOWN may finally be easing, but there's still no prospect of gyms being opened within the next few weeks, so we need to keep ourselves ticking over in our own homes.

However, now that schooling venues and equestrian centres are beginning to restart their business, and our riding horizons are opening up, it's essential that we keep our bodies in tip-top condition.

Here's a batch of exercises – stretching, cardio and dynamic power – to hone your muscles and target those areas riders typically need to work on.

Simply keeping fit is a good baseline, but riders have very different requirements from other sportspeople, from hip flexibility to enable you to absorb your horse's stride, to working the rising muscles that give you stability around the hips and pelvis for lateral work.

And check out the horsey props suggested this week – lunge line for skipping rope; mounting block, bales or even a salt lick for your stepwork. There's no excuse; let's get stepping...

ABOUT SARAH

CHARTERED physiotherapist Sarah Claridge runs Meadow Physio & Pilates, specialising in rider strength and fitness.

Visit meadowphysioandpilates.com for online classes and one-to-one sessions to help improve your body's optimal performance.

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Stretching



**NEW
FITNESS
SERIES**

W STRETCH ▲

10 secs, 6 reps, 3 sets

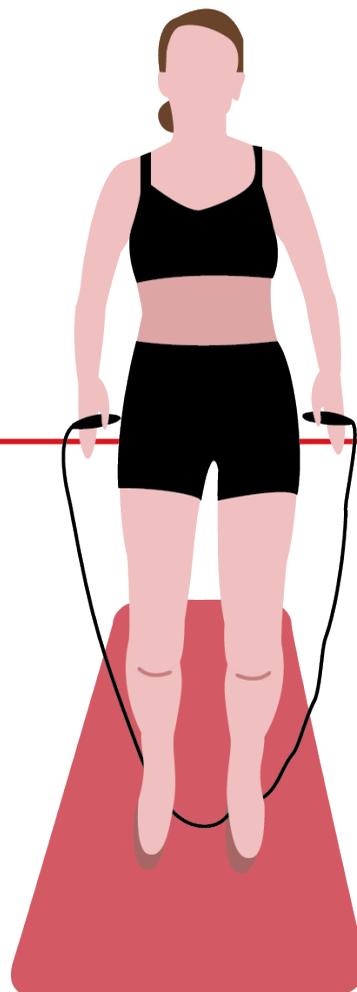
Adopt a sitting position with your back straight, legs out wide and knees bent.

Drop both knees to one side under control until you are in 90/90 position (see diagram, above).

Return to the start position and repeat on the opposite side.

SARAH SAYS: "This is a lovely opener for the hips to encourage flexibility – key for absorbing your horse's natural strides."

* You should not do this exercise if you have a hip replacement or excessive hip movement/hypermobility.



Cardio

ROPE SKIPPING ▶

40 secs, 1 rep, 3 sets

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart.

Hold the skipping rope handles in each hand. Extend the hands and forearms at least one foot away from the body, at a 45-degree angle, to create a larger arc to jump through.

Step over the rope.

The rope should hang behind you and just touch the back of the feet.

Use the hands and wrists to swing the rope up and over your head.

Do not move the arms when swinging the rope; keep the motion limited to the wrists.

When the rope is coming around towards the

front of the feet, hop over it by standing on the tiptoes, and push off with the balls of the feet. Try to keep this motion in the ankles.

Maintain a fluid circular motion coordinating the wrists and feet and continue at a steady rhythmic pace.

SARAH SAYS: "If you don't have a skipping rope, you could even use a long lead rope or lunge line!"

Start with 30 seconds skipping and a 20-second rest between sets, building up to 40 seconds skipping with a 20-second rest, doing three sets in total.

Building up cardiovascular fitness is key for those riding multiple horses per day or competing."

Dynamic power

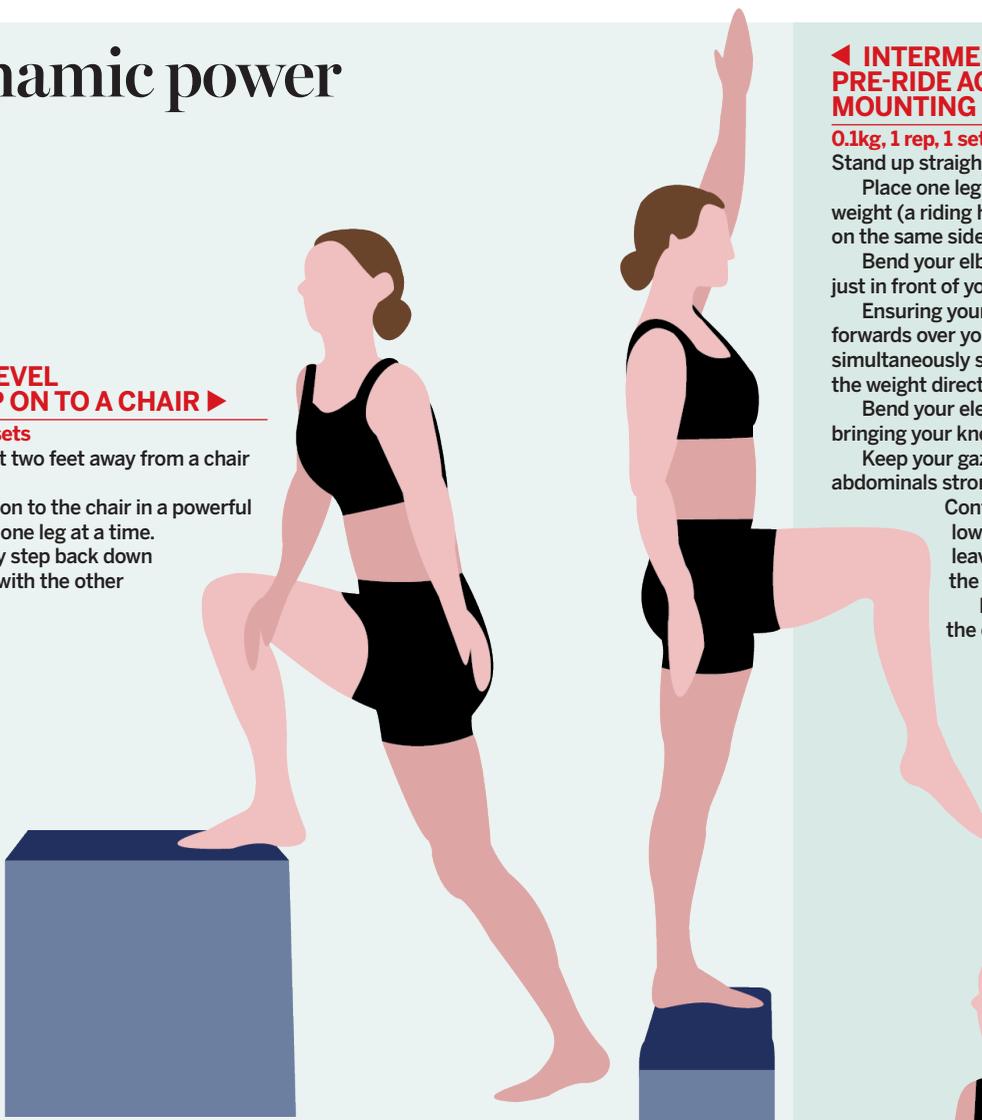
BASIC LEVEL STEP-UP ON TO A CHAIR ▶

30 reps, 3 sets

Stand about two feet away from a chair or box.

Step up on to the chair in a powerful movement, one leg at a time.

Carefully step back down and repeat with the other leg leading.



◀ INTERMEDIATE LEVEL PRE-RIDE ACTIVATION ON MOUNTING BLOCK

0.1kg, 1 rep, 1 set

Stand up straight facing a step.

Place one leg on the step and hold a weight (a riding hat would do) in the hand on the same side.

Bend your elbow so the weight rests just in front of your shoulder.

Ensuring your knee travels directly forwards over your toes, step up while simultaneously straightening the arm with the weight directly up towards the ceiling.

Bend your elevated leg through, bringing your knee up in front.

Keep your gaze ahead and your abdominals strong throughout.

Control the movement as you lower back down to the floor, leaving the same leg on the step.

Repeat this movement on the other side.



ADVANCED LEVEL BOX JUMPS ▶

1 rep, 1 set

Stand facing a box with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.

Keeping your chest up, squat down and immediately jump onto the box, extending through your hips.

Land softly in a squat position, stand and reset to the starting position

SARAH SAYS: "For all of these dynamic power exercises, for your box you could use a salt lick, a sturdy mountain block or some bales of bedding if secured safely so as not to tip over. I'd suggest choosing the height according to your level of fitness, from 12in high up to 75in for advanced."

These three exercises use a large number of key riding muscles, such as the posterior oblique sling, which are responsible for your rising trot, two-point canter seat and anti-gravity muscles, which are used on landing from a showjumping position.

They help us to lift our wheelbarrows of muck and hay through our legs and our saddles on our horses.

Using a single leg at a time and alternating the legs aids the stability around the hip and pelvis, which is key for lateral work and aids.

Start with 30 seconds exercise, 30 seconds rest and build towards 40 seconds work, 20 seconds rest.

TAKE CARE: With any new form of exercise, your body needs to build up gradually to avoid strain. Seek the advice of a chartered physiotherapist if you are unsure if you should do any exercises due to underlying health conditions. Particular caution applies if you have any cartilage injuries

in your knees or joint replacements; avoid the cardiovascular exercises if you have any unstable cardiac health problems, acute disc bulges/prolapses or referred leg pain, pins and needles, numbness, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, gynaecological conditions – or

if you are pregnant or undergoing cancer treatment. **H&H**

**NEXT
WEEK**

Squats, high-knee hops and bicep curls