

Flex those muscles

Whether you're doing yard chores or gearing up to compete again, chartered physio *Sarah Claridge* recommends these strength and conditioning exercises to improve your fitness levels

THERE is now light at the end of the tunnel as various disciplines begin to look at possible strategies for competition life after lockdown ends.

Many of us have lost some motivation during these two months on standby, so if

you're suffering from a bit of "Quarantine 15", here are a few exercises to set you back on the path to full fitness.

You can do them all at home, on the yard or in your garden – there's no need for any specialist equipment or gym. What are you waiting for?

ABOUT SARAH

CHARTERED physiotherapist Sarah Claridge runs Meadow Physio and 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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**NEW
FITNESS
SERIES**



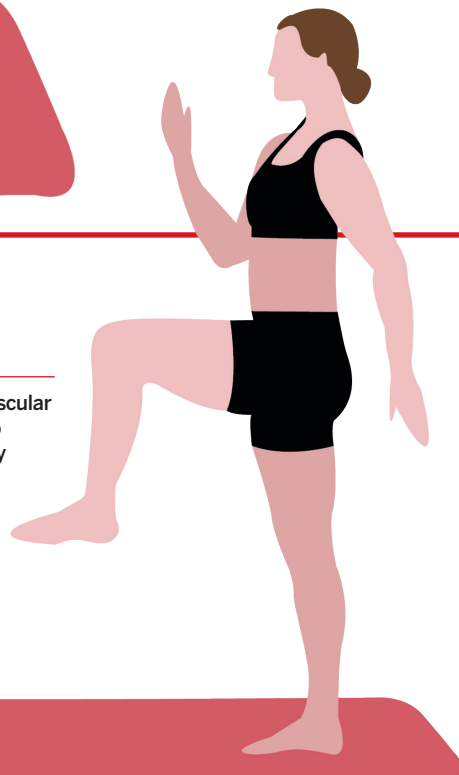
Stretching

◀ SQUAT TO HAMSTRING STRETCH

10 secs, 6 reps, 3 sets

Stand tall with your feet wider than hip-width apart. Bend forward at the waist to grab your toes with your hands. Drop down into a deep squat, keeping your arms straight, elbows inside your knees, back flat, and chest up. While holding your toes, raise your hips back and straighten your knees until you feel a good stretch in the back of your legs. Reverse the movement pattern and return to the starting position.

SARAH SAYS: "This stretch increases flexibility for the back, hips and hamstrings. It's a nice mobilisation and stretch for the hamstrings, to aid your ability to lengthen your leg down around your horse's sides. Never force, only gently stretch. Do not go too low if you have had a hip replacement."



Cardio

HIGH KNEE & ARM HOPS ▶

30 reps, 3 sets

Stand up straight. Bring one knee up as high as you can in front of you while you hop forward on your standing leg.

Simultaneously raise your opposite arm. Hop forward on your standing leg once more, landing with both feet.

Upon landing, instantly repeat, leading with your other arm and leg. Continue to travel forward for the desired distance. Keep your torso upright and avoid twisting.

Start with 30 seconds of high knee hops with a 20-second rest between sets. Then build up to 40 seconds skipping with a 20-second recovery break, three sets in total.

SARAH SAYS: "It helps build our cardiovascular fitness, chest and lung expansion, but also explosive power in the legs and arms is key for competitive riders. The single leg hop helps increase ankle stability and strength, which is useful for shorter stirrups in showjumping, as a jockey and in two-point seat canter."

Strength

BICEP CURL TO OVERHEAD PRESS ▶

2kg, 12 reps, 3 sets

Stand with the weights in both hands – alternatively you can use salt licks if you don't have weights.

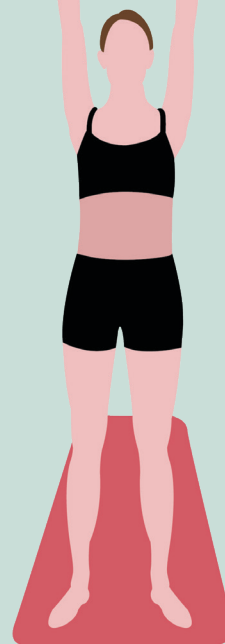
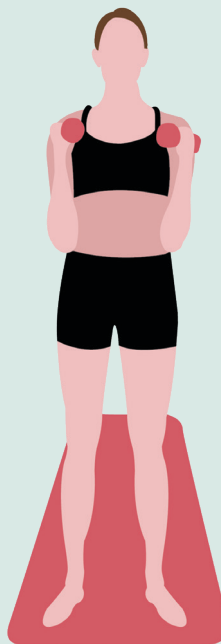
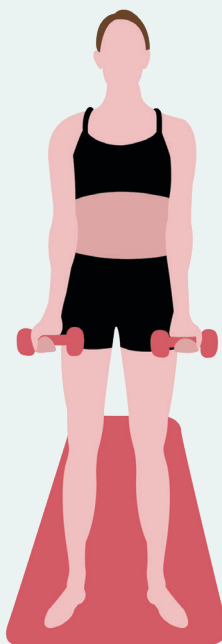
Keep your elbows close to your side as you bend the elbow, bringing the weights towards your shoulders.

Continue this movement reaching the weights up to the ceiling in an overhead press.

Reverse the movements to bring it back down to the start position. Notice how your hands rotate as you curl up.

SARAH SAYS: "Upper body strength is important for putting on tack, rugs and grooming our horses, alongside all the yard duties.

"This is a simple exercise you can make harder by going heavier with the weights to suit your level of fitness. Make sure you engage your core during the exercise so as not to arch or lean back while performing the overhead press section.



"To increase the difficulty, go up to 6–8kg each arm, 6–8 reps, three sets. As the weight gets heavier the reps should get lower, as a general rule of thumb."

NEXT WEEK

Pigeon poses, piriformis and some serious plank poses

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**

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