

A final push

In the last of this fitness series, chartered physio *Sarah Claridge* suggests a variety-packed fitness routine, with a demanding plank exercise to round it off

DOZENS of fitness challenges flooded our social media at the start of lockdown – but how many have you managed to keep up?

This week's fitness focus is the side plank – key for working those crucial muscles which help your lateral work, controlling

green horses and general yard chores.

Those who managed lockdown's 30-day plank challenge could be ready for the advanced exercise, while those of us who have been taking the last two months rather more sedately may have to start planking from scratch. Whatever your fitness levels, it's not too late to start now.

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.

● Follow on Instagram and Facebook @Meadowphysioandpilates

Stretching

◀ PIRIFORMIS STRETCH IN SITTING

45secs, 2 reps, 2 sets

Start in a seated position.

Cross one leg to rest your ankle on the opposite knee.

Apply gentle pressure to the knee as you lean forward, increasing the depth of the stretch.

Hold this position, you should feel a comfortable tension with no pain.

SLEEPING PIGEON POSE ▼

45secs, 2 reps, 2 sets

Start on your hands and knees.

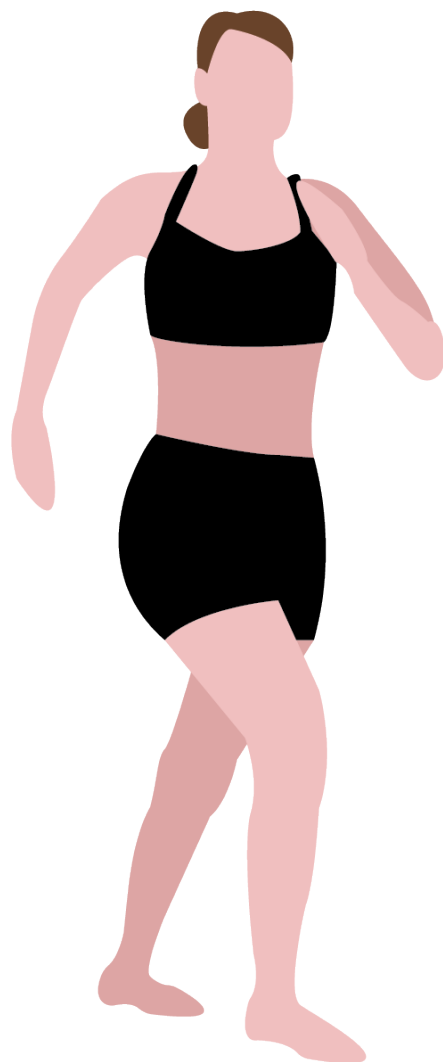
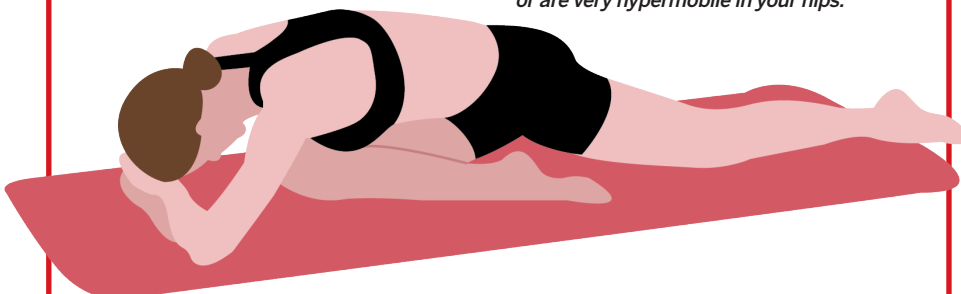
Bring your right knee forward and get as much external rotation in your hip as you can.

Lie your leg down on the mat and lower your chest down to the floor as far as you can.

SARAH SAYS: "The piriformis exercise stretches the buttock muscles while the pigeon pose is an advanced stretch for the gluteal and hip flexor muscles in the hips."

"Both exercises should be comfortable to hold for 30-45 secs. These muscles can get tight when worked hard or if they are over dominant. Stretches should help improve hip mobility and consequently your body's ability to move with your horse in sync."

**Do not do this if you have a hip replacement or are very hypermobile in your hips.*



Cardio

RUNNING ▲

40secs, 1 rep 3 sets

Consult with your therapist or GP on how long you can run and at what interval you can continue.

SARAH SAYS: "This could be a fast walk, moderate jog or fast sprint start with 30sec work, 30sec rest, building up to 40sec work and 20sec rest."

"It helps build cardiovascular fitness, increase chest and lung expansion, and boost the feel-good hormones, which are key to a healthy body and mind."

**LAST
IN THE
SERIES**

Strength

BASIC LEVEL SIDE PLANK ON KNEES ▶

10secs, 6 reps, 3 sets

Lie on your side and prop yourself up on your elbow.

Bend your knees and lift your hips off the mat until you have a straight line from your knees to the top of your head.

Hold this position for as long as you can.



INTERMEDIATE LEVEL SIDE STAR ▶

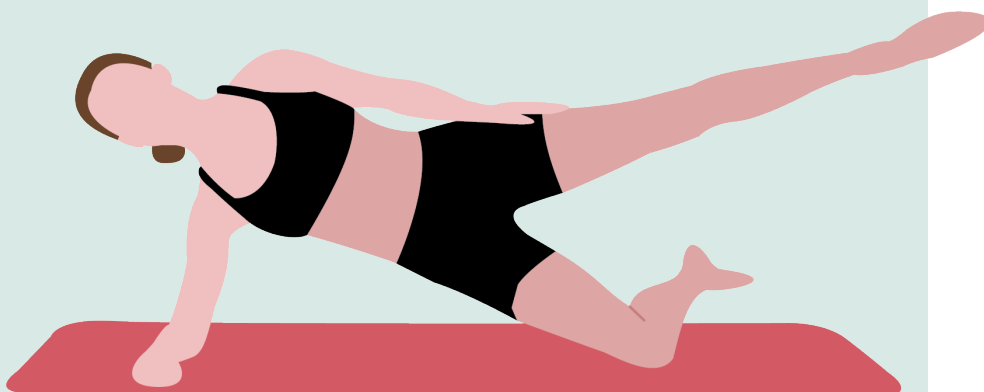
10secs, 6 reps, 3 sets

Lie on your side and prop yourself up on your elbow.

Bend your knees and lift your hips off the mat until you have a straight line from your knees to the top of your head.

Holding this position, straighten your top leg out, and then lift it directly up towards the ceiling.

Ensure this leg does not travel forwards. Control the movement as you lower the leg back down and then repeat.



ADVANCED LEVEL SIDE PLANK HIGH ELEVATION HIP ADDUCTION ▶

10secs, 6 reps, 3 sets

This is a hard exercise and should be built up to gradually.

Lie on your affected side with your top foot elevated on a chair.

Your lower foot will be positioned on the floor.

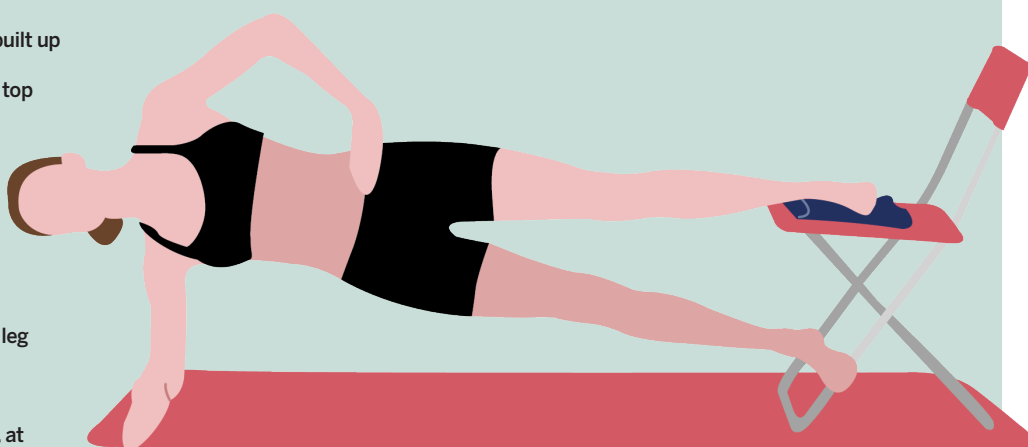
Place your lower forearm on the floor with your elbow under your shoulder.

Lift your hips off the floor until you have a straight line from your head to your ankles.

Holding this position, lift the lower leg up and hold.

Lower this leg back to the floor and repeat.

SARAH SAYS: "These three exercises, at different difficulty levels, help build strength and stability in the shoulder, abdominals and hip/pelvis. These are key for taking rugs and saddles on/off, lateral work, and keeping green horses on the straight.



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**