

OVER THE MOON — BASIC STRETCH

Large exercise balls can be intimidating for older adults. You want participants to like these balls because they may be using more of them in the future. Here is a wonderful activity to introduce them to the ball. It's a simple back stretch that feels great. The roll of the ball provides the kinesthetic stimulus, a slight change in balance and back support.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Provides a positive, early, and easy ball experience for participants.
- ⦿ Stretches the low back and sides.
- ⦿ Participants have a ball!

Set It Up »

Round up as many exercise balls as possible; But you'll need at least one. Participants can take turns—this activity goes quickly.

How to Do It »

Demonstrate the movement for participants.

The Start

- ⦿ Participants sit tall on the edge of their chair, knees as wide as comfortably possible, abs in, and shoulder blades back and down.
- ⦿ Place hands on the ball.
- ⦿ Take a deep breath and sit tall to prepare.



The Moves

- ⦿ Keeping hands placed where they lay, exhale fully and roll the ball forward.
- ⦿ Use these cues:
 - Keep your back tall and straight. The forward lean should happen at the hip, not through the spine. (Hip flexion, not spinal.)
 - Keep your hands where you originally placed them on the ball. As you roll the ball away from you, the ball stretches you.
 - At the end of the forward roll, lower your head and relax a few moments (10-15 seconds, if tolerable) while your back is gently stretching.
 - Do you feel a nice stretch across the low back and shoulders?
 - Can you feel how the arc of the ball helps the stretch?
- ⦿ Roll the ball back and sit tall again. Repeat, if desired.

Roll Ball to the Side

- ⦿ Place just one hand on the ball. Use the other hand for back support; put it on your chair or opposite knee.
- ⦿ Inhale deeply and sit tall to prepare.
- ⦿ Exhale and roll the ball to the side to stretch the opposite sides and shoulders.
- ⦿ Inhale and roll the ball back to the center and sit tall again.
- ⦿ Exhale and roll the ball out to the other side.
- ⦿ Lean from the hip; allow the shoulders and sides to extend and stretch (think Venus de Milo arms for added stretch).
- ⦿ Hold each gentle side stretch 10 to 15 seconds—relax and enjoy the stretch.
- ⦿ Roll back to center and sit tall.



Keep It Safe »

Nothing should hurt. Show and discuss the difference between hinging at the hip joint and spinal bending—they want hip hinge, not back rounding. Also, because this activity involves forward leaning, support for the back must be provided. The ball provides back support because participants are resting part of their weight on the ball. When moving to the side, keep one hand on the opposite leg for additional back support.

Live It »

The ball takes on body weight as participants lean forward, and its big round shape helps stretch a tight back. Participants should be *Over the Moon* about using the ball!