

Balance into Health



Health Promotion & Disease
Prevention Directorate

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Balance

Balance training allows control over the body in movement. The eyes, ears, and nervous system are the three pathways that help maintain balance.

Balance training develops good core control. This means good control over the muscles that surround the ankle, knee, and hip, such as the calves, quads, hip flexors, adductors, and glutes. Training the core muscles is vital for everybody of every age, so everybody should be encouraged to start incorporating it into their workout.

A regular balance programme can help:

- Neuromuscular coordination, it helps to improve the communication between brain and muscles.
- With muscle isolation.
- The body to burn more calories since it has to work harder to stabilise.
- Improve core muscles: which aid core stabilization and in turn improves coordination, athletic skill, and posture.
- Prevent falls by improving the ability to control and maintain the body's position, whether one is moving or remaining still.

Start a balance programme safely: Anywhere, Anytime

Training tips to improve balance:

- Avoid training with thick rigid footwear or any footwear. The foot is made up of 28 muscles that cross into 25 joints, so avoid footwear that does not allow these muscles to interact with one another through each movement in the foot. This interaction helps to stimulate further the nervous system and improve balance.
- Train the entire body, and complement balance exercises with other forms of exercise, to maintain optimal balance throughout the body.
- Stretch and warm-up before each workout to decrease the risk of injury.
- Take a week off from training every 2 to 3 months, to ensure that muscles recover fully.

Safety tips

- Have a sturdy chair or something solid nearby to hold on to.
- People are advised to consult with their doctor if they are unsure about doing a particular exercise.

Standing balance exercises can be progressed to a harder level in the following manner:

- Start by holding on to a sturdy chair for support.
- Progressed to holding on to the chair with only one hand.
- Do the exercises without holding.
- Once a person is steady on his/her feet, he/she should try to do the exercises with his/her eyes closed.
- Do the exercises on an unstable surface (eg. sand).

Balance Exercises

Balance exercises can be done by everybody and in different environments. It is advisable to progress the exercises slowly. Progress from supporting yourself to free standing to using unstable ground and closing your eyes.

Ankle raises



Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your body weight equally distributed on both legs. Raise onto your toes with your heels about 3-4cm above the ground. Hold the position for 20-30 seconds.

The above exercise can be done with comfortable sports shoes or progressed by doing the exercise bare-foot. This can be progressed further by doing the same exercise on an uneven surface such as sand.

Walking on a Straight Line



- Place one foot in front of the other and walk in a straight line for approximately 10m.



- This exercise can be progressed by doing the exercise barefoot and by walking on an uneven surface such as sand.

Walking on Tip-Toes



- Raise your feet onto the toes so that the heel is approximately 4 cm above the ground and the body weight is resting on the toes.
- Walk in a straight line standing on tip toes.



Weight Shift

Single Leg Balance



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs. Hold onto a chair for support.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, the one closest to the chair, then lift your other leg off the floor and stand on one foot.

- Hold the position as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting arm and supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



Single-leg Balance Progressed



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, then lift your other leg off the floor and stand on one foot.

- Hold the position as long as you can, up to a maximum of 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



The above exercise can be done with comfortable sport shoes or progressed by doing the exercise bare-foot. This can be progressed further by doing the same exercise on an uneven surface such as sand.

Single-leg Balance - Forward Reach



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs. Hold onto a chair for support.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, the one closest to the chair, then lift your other leg off the floor reaching in front of you and stand on one foot.

- Hold the position as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting arm and supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



Single-leg Balance - Forward Reach Progressed



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, then lift your other leg off the floor reaching in front of you and stand on one foot.



- Hold the position as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



The above exercise can be done with comfortable sport shoes or progressed by doing the exercise bare-foot. This can be progressed further by doing the same exercise on an uneven surface such as sand.

Single-leg Balance - 90° Leg Raise



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs. Hold onto a chair for support.

- Shift your weight onto one leg, the one closest to the chair, then lift your other leg forward off the floor, bending the leg at the knee at 90° and stand on one foot.
- Hold the position as long as you can, up to a maximum of 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting arm and supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



Single-leg Balance - 90° Leg Raise Progressed



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, then lift your other leg forward off the floor, bending the leg at the knee and stand on one foot.



- Hold the position as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



The above exercise can be done with comfortable sport shoes or progressed by doing the exercise bare-foot. This can be progressed further by doing the same exercise on an uneven surface such as sand.

Single-leg Balance - Backward Bend



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs. Hold onto a chair for support.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, the one closest to the chair, then lift your other leg backwards off the floor and stand on one foot.

- Hold the position as long as you can, up to a maximum of 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting arm and supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



Single-leg Balance - Backward Bent Progressed



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, then lift your other leg off the floor backwards and stand on one foot.



- Hold the position as long as you can, up to a maximum of 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.



The above exercise can be done with comfortable sport shoes or progressed by doing the exercise bare-foot. This can be progressed further by doing the same exercise on an uneven surface such as sand.

Single Leg Balance With Weight



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your weight equally distributed on both legs.
- Hold a light weight in one hand and lift it perpendicular to the ground.
- Shift your weight onto one leg, then lift the other leg on the same side as the weight, off the floor and stand on one foot.



- Hold the position as long as you can, up to a maximum of 30 seconds.
- Return to the starting position changing the supporting foot. Then repeat the exercise on the other side.
- Return to the starting position lifting your leg in front of you. Repeat the exercise on the other side.



- Return to the starting position lifting your leg at a right angle in front of you. Repeat the exercise on the other leg side.
- Return to the starting position lifting your leg behind you. Repeat the exercise on the other leg side.



The exercises shown on the previous page and the above exercises can be done with comfortable sport shoes or progressed by doing the exercises bare-foot. This can be progressed further by doing the same exercises on an uneven surface such as sand.



Core Exercises

Standing Squat For Balance



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and weight equally distributed on both legs. Outstretch your arms straight in front of you and your keep back straight.

- Squat, lean slightly forward and hold the position for 20-30 seconds.
- The above exercise can be done with comfortable sport shoes or progressed by doing the exercise bare-foot. This can be progressed further by doing the same exercise on an uneven surface such as sand.



Hip Adduction



- Lie on your side with your body supported by your arms.
- Keep the bottom leg straight. Bend the top leg at the knee and hip, and place your foot in front of the knee of the bottom leg. Keep one hip above the other and ensure you do not lean at the pelvis.



- Keep the toe and knee pointed forward as you lift your bottom leg. Hold the position for a few seconds.
- Return to the start position and change side and leg.

Hip Abduction - Side Leg Raise



- Lie on your side with your body supported by one of your arms and your head supported on your bottom arm.
- Keep your legs straight. Keep one hip above the other, and ensure you do not lean at the pelvis.



- Keep the toe and knee pointed forward as you lift your upper leg. Hold the position for a few seconds.
- Return to the start position and change side, and leg.

Plank



- Lie on your stomach. Raise yourself up so that you are resting on your forearms and your toes. Align your head and neck with your back, and place your shoulders directly above your elbows. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Do not lift your buttocks up.
- Hold for a few seconds.
- Return to the start position and repeat.

Side Bridge Plank



The side plank challenges your stability and improves core strength by working the muscles along the side of your body.

- Lie on your left side, raising yourself onto your left forearm. Place your left shoulder directly above your left elbow, keeping your shoulders, hips and knees in alignment. Rest your right arm along the side of your body.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat on your right side.

Quadruped



- Start on your hands and knees. Place your hands directly below your shoulders, and align your head and neck with your back. Tighten your abdominal muscles.



- Raise one of your arms off the floor and reach ahead. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat with your other arm.
- Raise your one leg off the floor. Tighten your trunk muscles for balance. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat with your other leg.
- For added challenge, raise your left arm and your right leg at the same time. Repeat with your right arm and left leg.

*The benefits of being physically active are endless!
Capture all possible opportunities to be both
physically and mentally active.*



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