



Regular Exercise Helps Improve Balance

Looking for ways to improve your balance?

Be more active. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate exercise per day.

Research shows exercise helps build stronger bones and muscles to improve balance and prevent injuries.⁴ Here are some things you can do:

- **Walk, bike, or climb stairs.** You'll strengthen your lower back. If you're just starting out, try a stationary bike or stair stepper.
- **Practice yoga and stretching.** You'll improve posture and balance. You'll also strengthen and stretch tight muscles.
- **Do tai chi.** It's a gentle form of martial arts. You'll learn to shift your weight and stay balanced as you move slowly into different positions.
- **Strength train.** Lift weights. Do bodyweight exercises like push-ups, planks, squats, and lunges. You'll build stronger bones and muscles. You'll also improve balance and the brain-body connection.

Video:
Improve balance
& stability in 8
minutes
<https://tinyurl.com/m6rejtfj>

5 Moves to Improve Balance at Home

In one recent study, people did balance exercises at home 3 days a week. They also walked at least 30 minutes twice a week.⁵

The results: People who followed the plan for 12 months reduced their risk for falls by 36 percent.

Want to improve your balance at home? Practice these 5 moves:

1 One-Legged Wonder

Take off your shoes. Stand on one leg, shoulders back, stare straight ahead. Look up from your line of sight about six inches.

Time: Balance for one minute, or as long as you can. Switch legs and repeat.

Modify: Try it with your eyes closed. Balance with one finger on the wall if you need to. Work up to balancing longer than a minute.

2 Tippy Toes to Heels

Take off your shoes. Stand up on your toes for 10 seconds. Then rock back on your heels (toes pointed up). Count to 10.

Time: 10 seconds toes, 10 seconds heels.

Modify: Increase time on toes and heels. Try it with your eyes closed. Balance with one finger on the wall if you need to. Or try walking around the house or the office like this. Heels, toes... heels, toes.

3 Bird-Dog Balance

Kneel down on the floor, palms down shoulder width-apart. Keep your neck and spine neutral. Look down. Lift your

Watch Your Step: 9 Factors That Increase Fall Risk

Nobody plans to lose their balance and fall. It just happens. One minute you're carrying groceries up the stairs. The next minute you're sprawled out on the ground.

You get in a hurry. Something catches you off balance. And you stumble your way to the ground.

You trip and fall playing a sport. Or you fall because you're totally distracted, like the Pennsylvania woman who was texting while walking in a mall. She tripped and fell headfirst into a fountain. Yes, this really happened.

So what puts you at risk for falling?³

Here are 9 common causes:

1. Weak muscles and bones
2. Poor mind-body connection
3. Excessive stress, distractions, and multi-tasking
4. Slick surfaces, or objects in your path
5. Slick shoes, or shoes that don't fit properly
6. Vision problems
7. Illness
8. Side effects of some medications
9. Too much alcohol



Benefits of
balance exercises
<https://tinyurl.com/vnwb6t8n>

leg and hand off the floor and extend your arm parallel to the floor. Lift your right knee, and straighten your leg backwards until it's parallel to the floor. Repeat with opposite arm and leg.

Time: Hold the position for 10 seconds.

Modify: Work up to holding the position for a minute. Make it harder by balancing on your toes, instead of one knee.

4 Hula Hips

Stand up straight, legs together, shoulders back. Imagine keeping a hula hoop going in slow motion. Make a big circle with your hips to the left, without moving your shoulders. Switch sides. **Time:** 10 times per side

Modify: Try this in the pool. Or use an actual hula hoop. Increase repetitions per side over time.

5 One-Eyed Blinker

Stand up straight, legs together, shoulders back. Look straight ahead. Now close one eye. Pay attention to how your perception of balance changes. Repeat with the other eye.

Time: Start with 10 seconds per eye.

Modify: Work up to 30 seconds per eye or longer. Now try walking down the hall with one eye closed. Or practice this exercise sitting down first.

References

1. Thomas, E., et al. (2019). Physical activity programs for balance and fall prevention in elderly. *Medicine (Baltimore)*, 98(27): e16218. From: <https://tinyurl.com/nhefayf3>
2. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (2021). Traumatic occupational injuries. From: <https://tinyurl.com/3vjzsbu2>
3. National Institutes of Health. (2018). What are ways to prevent falls and related fractures? Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases Resource Center. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y8kemaxd>
4. Harvard Health Publishing. (2021). Easy ways to improve your balance. From: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8t3jmm>
5. Liu-Ambrose, T., et al. (2019). Effect of a home-based exercise program on subsequent falls among community-dwelling high-risk older adults after a fall. *JAMA*, 321(21): 2092-2100. From: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8zd936>