

**Q.** How can I improve my balance?

**A.** Ever lose your balance, stumble, and fall? Maybe you trip on the stairs, stub your toe, get in a hurry, or feel wobbly and fall. It happens... and it's not just old people.

Beginning around age 40, the brain's ability to process information about motion and balance starts to decline.<sup>1</sup>

The good news: If you stay active throughout your life, you can slow the process.

The bad news: Most people don't think about improving their balance until they have a problem. For example:<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 4** adults over age 65 fall each year.

**Every 11 seconds** an older adult is hospitalized for a fall.

**3 million** older adults are treated for fall-related injuries every year.

**1 out of 5** falls lead to broken bones and brain injuries.

### 5 Moves to Improve Balance

What can you do to prevent falls and improve your balance? Practice. Work on balance exercises 2 to 3 days a week for 10 to 15 minutes.<sup>3</sup> Give these balance exercises a try:

#### 1. Stand on one foot

Bend one knee and lift your foot about six inches off the ground. Balance on the other foot. If you



start to lose balance, grab a chair or use the wall to steady yourself. Keep your leg lifted for 60 seconds and then switch to the other. Too easy? Try it without wearing shoes.

#### 2. Heel-to-toe walk

Walk around the room with your heel touching the toes of your opposite foot with each step. For added difficulty, try it with your eyes closed.

#### 3. Straight-line walk

Walk in as straight a line as possible. Practice walking on a curb as if you're a gymnast on the balance beam.

#### 4. Bodyweight squats

Lower-body strength training can help your balance a lot. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Slowly lower yourself into a squatting position. Aim for 6 to 15, then rest and repeat.

Too easy? Hold weights in your hands while doing squats.

#### 5. Tai chi, yoga, or Pilates

These activities improve your mobility and stability. One study found that balance improved after just 8 weeks of tai chi training twice a week.<sup>4</sup> Sign up for a group class

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at a local gym or community center. Or learn to do them on your own using videos or books.

### Practice balance to stand up for your health

Want to prevent falls and improve balance? Make balance training a regular part of your routine. Everyone can benefit from an improved sense of balance. It doesn't matter if you are an athlete or an aging senior. Now is always the best time to start to improve your balance.

Try these stability and balance exercises

<https://tinyurl.com/yveapvdz>

### References

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