

# Exercise and Balance Training as We Age

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Mary Wichern, Respiratory Care Practitioner



You can do exercises to improve your balance almost anytime, anywhere as long as you have something sturdy nearby to hold on to if you become unsteady. In the beginning, using a chair or the wall for support will help you work on your balance safely.

Balance training should be performed 5-7 times a week, 1-2 times per day. Balance training will decrease risk of falls, increase independence, increase daily safety movements, increase overall sense of stability, body awareness and security.



## PROGRESSING TO IMPROVE BALANCE:

The exercises in this guide — especially those to strengthen your legs and ankles — can help improve your balance. As you progress, try adding the challenges shown below to help even more.

~start by holding on to a sturdy chair with both hands for support.

~To challenge yourself further, try holding on to the chair with only one hand.

~As you feel steady, try using just one finger to balance you. Then, try balancing without holding on.

~When you are steady on your feet, try doing the exercises with your eyes closed.

You can use these modifications with the following exercises:



## STAND ON ONE FOOT:

You can do this exercise while waiting for the bus or standing in line at the grocery. For an added challenge, you can modify the exercise to improve your balance. (See **Progressing to Improve Balance** above)



1. Stand on one foot behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance.
2. Hold position for up to 10 seconds.
3. Repeat 10-15 times.
4. 10-15 times with other leg.

## BALANCE WALK:

Good balance helps you walk safely and avoid tripping and falling over objects in your way.



1. Raise arms to sides, shoulder height.
2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.
3. Walk in a straight line with one foot in front of the other.
4. As you walk, lift your back leg. Pause for 1 second before stepping forward.
5. Repeat for 20 steps, alternating legs.

## TOE STAND:

This exercise will help make walking easier by strengthening your calves and ankles. For an added challenge, you can modify the exercise to improve your balance. (See [Progressing to Improve Balance.](#))



1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, feet shoulder-width apart, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly stand on tiptoes, as high as possible.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower heels to the floor.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.

**SIDE LEG RAISE:** This exercise strengthens hips, thighs and buttocks.



1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with feet slightly apart, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg out to the side. Keep your back straight and your toes facing forward. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for 3 seconds. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg.
4. Repeat 10-15 times.
5. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg

## HEEL TO TOE WALK:

Having good balance is important for many everyday activities, such as going up and down stairs.



1. Position the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of the other foot. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch.
2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.
3. Take a step. Put your heel just in front of the toe of your other foot.
4. Repeat for 20 steps.

## STANDING SIDE BEND:



- ~Stand against a wall for support, if needed
- ~Place arms above head and lean to the side until a stretch in the side is felt
- ~Breathe slowly and concentrate on the stretch, for around 5 seconds
- ~While exhaling, bring torso back to center and switch sides

## CHAIR STAND:

**This exercise, which strengthens your abdomen and thighs, will make it easier to get in and out of the car.**

Sit toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair with knees bent and feet flat on floor, shoulder-width apart.

Lean back with your hands crossed over your chest.

Keep your back and shoulders straight throughout exercise. Breathe in slowly.

Breathe out and bring your upper body forward until sitting upright.

Extend your arms so they are parallel to the floor and slowly stand up.

Breathe in as you slowly sit down.

Repeat 10-15 times.

