



Improve Your Balance

CHALLENGE

Practice balance movements to prevent falls & injuries

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Improve Your Balance”
2. Practice balance movements and exercises to improve balance.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



“I have fallen, and I can’t get up.” This made-for-TV-product catchphrase raised awareness about the risk of falls.

It also became an icon of pop culture spoofed in movies, TV shows, social media, and comic strips. But it really isn’t a laughing matter.

You might think falling is just a problem old people have to worry about. But it’s not. A lot of things could cause you to lose your balance and fall.

- Ever had a cat run under your feet walking down the stairs?
- Lose your balance on the soccer field or basketball court?
- Or slip and fall on a wet surface?

It happens a lot, and not just to the elderly. For example, 39-year-old Washington resident Lauren

Fall-Factor Quiz

How much do you know about the importance of balance? Take the quiz to find out:



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1. About 10 percent of all work-related injuries are caused by falls.
2. Reducing stress and distractions can help you be more aware of fall risks.
3. An estimated 1 million people a year end up in the hospital because of a fall.
4. Activities like tai chi can train your brain and your body to improve balance.
5. Strength and balance exercises can help prevent falls at any age.

How did you do? About 26 percent of work-related injuries are caused by slips, trips, and falls.² Every year, about 8 million people end up in the hospital because of a fall. Not all falls are preventable, but taking action to improve balance can reduce your risk for a fall or injury.

Answers: 1. False. 2. True. 3. False. 4. True. 5. True.

Mayer says she tripped in New York City, fell and chipped a tooth, and even broke a toe while visiting her parents in California. Ouch!

Here’s another one: At a gas station quickie mart in Ireland, a 32-year-old nurse tripped on a box and fractured her knee. It took a couple years and two surgeries to recover.

There’s a million slip-and-fall videos on YouTube, and you can probably think of a few of your own viral-worthy off-balance moments.

When you lose your balance, trip, or fall, you can end up getting hurt. And while you can’t always avoid a fall, exercises and movements to train your brain and your body can help.¹ Take the month-long health challenge to Improve Your Balance.





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/vnw6t8n>

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/nhefay3>
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>



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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Practice balance movements and exercises (daily if possible) to improve balance.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to improve your balance.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____		
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_____ Number of days this month I practiced balance movements
 _____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____