

## How to do: Balance Exercises

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Falling is the number one cause of fractures among seniors. These fractures may lead to surgeries, joint replacements, loss of independence, increased stress, strain on your family and support network and negative effects on your mental health. The answer of course, is to just not fall (just like that commercial says!).

Easier said than done of course! But there are ways to help you prevent falling, and therefore, preventing many serious injuries. The key is strength and balance. The stronger you are, the more able you are at completing daily tasks in a safe way. The more balanced you are, the more stable you are to remain upright. This workshop will focus on the balance side of things.

Explained below are 10 exercises. Perform each exercise every day to maximize results!

### 1) Tandem stance

The picture on the right shows the tandem stance. It is standing with your toes to the heel of the foot in front of you. Try both sides, each foot should have a chance to be in front and in the back. Standing nice and upright, tall, looking forward, try to hold that position. To make it harder, hold it for longer time or try it with your eyes closed. Your vision is VERY important to balance so close your eyes to challenge your body to adapt!



### 2) Tandem walk

The same as the tandem stance except you will walk with your heel to toe. Once again, try to remain tall and straight, looking ahead of you, and staying in a straight line. Challenge yourself with uneven surfaces or once again, with your eyes closed.

### 3) One leg stance

One leg stance is exactly as it sounds: stand on one leg with support around you if needed. Hold the stand for as long as you can. Challenge yourself with an uneven surface, holding it for a long period of time, eyes closed or try reaching with your arms while in the stance.

### 4) Step stance

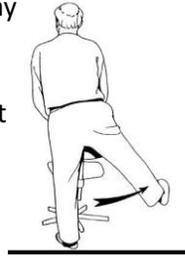
Step stance is the position you are in when you take a step: one leg forward and one leg back. The goal of this exercise is to shift your body weight forward onto the front foot, then shift it back onto your back foot without losing balance. Do this about 10 times and then switch feet positioning. Keep your back up straight, looking ahead and challenge yourself as needed with eyes closed or uneven surfaces.

### 5) Clock reach

Standing with your feet together, in tandem or step stance or even on one leg, reach with your arms to every hour of a clock. This will change your centre of gravity and challenge your balance. You can even try reaching in each direction as well for an added challenge. Pick the stance that challenges you safely, and give it a try!

### 6) Standing side leg lifts

Side leg lifts work both sides of the hip at the same time. The leg on the ground has to stay strong and support your body while the leg that is moving activates those important hip muscles to get them stronger! Try it with a chair or wall in front of you for support. Keep your moving leg's toes pointed slightly inward and do not move your trunk. It is not about the amplitude of the movement but rather the isolation of key muscles. You want to feel it in the side of your hip. Do about 10-15 reps on each leg.



#### 7) Side step over a line

As you can see in the picture, you are going to step over a line and cross your leg to the other side. Alternate your feet to repeat this exercise. Keep your back straight, head up and squeeze your bum muscles to keep them activated and strong! Do about 10-15 reps per leg. Challenge yourself with your eyes closed but keep a chair or wall around you for support if needed.



#### 8) Weight shifting

Fairly straight forward. Keep your feet together and move your weight front and back and side to side. Challenge yourself by moving further, by having your eyes closed or on an uneven surface. Keep support near by in case you need it!

#### 9) Side shuffle

For the side shuffle, keep your toes pointing forward, knees slightly bent, back straight and head up. Simply try to take steps to the side while maintaining that position. Try 10 steps in each direction.

#### 10) Standing on uneven surfaces

This is generally used as a way to challenge the exercises above. However, simply standing feet together on an uneven surface can be hard enough! Try it with your eyes closed for added difficulty.

There you have it, 10 exercises to try at home to improve your balance. Doing these every day will create those necessary connections between your brain and muscles to keep you stable and strong. If you have any questions at all, never hesitate to ask Ben via email [ben@thisishealthful.ca](mailto:ben@thisishealthful.ca) or phone 613-828-8586.

Good luck, have fun and stay balanced!