

# Build Your Balance

Have you ever felt unsteady walking on uneven ground? Or noticed that standing on one foot isn't as easy as it used to be? You're not alone—balance naturally changes as we age, but the good news is that it can be improved at any stage of life. By understanding what affects balance and practicing simple strategies, you can stay strong, steady, and independent.



## Did You Know?

Balance is more than just avoiding falls—it's essential for everyday activities like climbing stairs, reaching for objects, and walking confidently on different surfaces.

### Balance relies on three key systems working together:

#### Vestibular System

Located in the inner ear, this system detects head position and movement to help maintain equilibrium.

#### Proprioception

Your body's built-in "map" that helps you sense your position and movement in space.

#### Vision

Your eyes provide feedback about your surroundings, helping you navigate safely.

# Factors that Affect Balance

## Aging

Over time, muscle strength, flexibility, and reaction time naturally decline, impacting balance.

## Lifestyle

Inactivity, poor posture, and limited movement variety can weaken balance-related muscles.

## Health Conditions

Chronic conditions like arthritis, diabetes, or neurologic disorders can affect coordination and stability.

## Why Falls Happen

Falls can result from a combination of physical and environmental factors, including:



### **Muscle Weakness or Tightness:**

When muscles don't support movement effectively, balance is harder to maintain.



### **Slower Reaction Times:**

If you stumble, your body needs to react quickly to regain stability.



### **Environmental Hazards:**

Slippery floors, poor lighting, and clutter increase the risk of losing balance.

# How to Improve **Balance & Stability**

Balance can be strengthened just like any other skill. A well-rounded approach includes:



## **Strength Training**

Builds the muscles needed for stability and control.



## **Flexibility & Mobility Work**

Keeps joints moving freely, preventing stiffness.



## **Balance-Specific Exercises**

Improves coordination and reaction time.

## **Other key factors to consider:**

### **Vision:**

Regular eye exams ensure you're seeing clearly and detecting obstacles.

### **Footwear:**

Supportive, well-fitting shoes help maintain stability.

### **Environment:**

Reducing clutter, improving lighting, and using non-slip mats can make your home safer.

# Interactive Balance Tests

Want to assess your balance? Try these quick tests:

## T.U.G. Test: (Timed Up & Go)

1. Sit in a chair.
2. Stand up, walk 10 feet, turn around, and return to your seat.
3. If this takes longer than 11 seconds, it may indicate a higher fall risk.



## Sit-to-Stand Test:

1. Sit in a chair with your arms crossed over your chest or at your side.
2. Stand up and sit down five times in a row.
3. If this takes longer than 11 seconds, it may indicate a higher fall risk.



## Balance-Boosting Exercises

The exercises you learned in our Wellness Series session help build strength, stability, and coordination. Modify as needed to match your ability level.

## Strengthening Exercises

### Sit-to-Stand:

Builds leg strength for getting up and down safely.

### Lunges with Leg Lift:

Improves stability when shifting weight.

**Step-Ups:** Strengthens legs while mimicking real-life movement.



## Balance & Mobility Exercises

### Tandem Balance:

Improves stability and coordination for better balance control in daily activities.



### Lateral Balance Reach:

Enhances control when reaching or stepping sideways.



### Ladder Balance Drill:

Improves agility and reaction time.



# Real Life Strategies for Better Balance

Practical adjustments can help reduce fall risks and improve balance in daily life.



## At Home

Use your legs to lift heavy objects instead of your back, and maintain a steady pace when climbing stairs.



## While Standing or Walking

Focus on good posture—stand tall, engage your core, and take deliberate steps.



## Daily Movement Habits

Add balance exercises to everyday activities, like standing on one leg while brushing your teeth.



## Movement Breaks

If sitting for long periods, stand up and stretch every 30 minutes to keep muscles engaged.

# Key Takeaways



**Balance is essential for mobility, confidence, and independence.**



**With regular movement and small daily changes, you can strengthen your balance and reduce fall risks.**



**If balance challenges persist, Physical or Occupational Therapy can provide targeted exercises and strategies to keep you moving safely.**





