

Strength and balance exercises

A little exercise every day can help improve your balance and increase your chances of staying independent and healthy longer.

Getting enough exercise doesn't have to mean joining a gym, buying expensive equipment, or learning complicated exercise routines. In fact, many exercises that can help improve strength and balance can be done while talking on the phone or watching a favorite T.V. program. And the only equipment you'll need is your body and a chair or table for support.

Flexibility is important to:

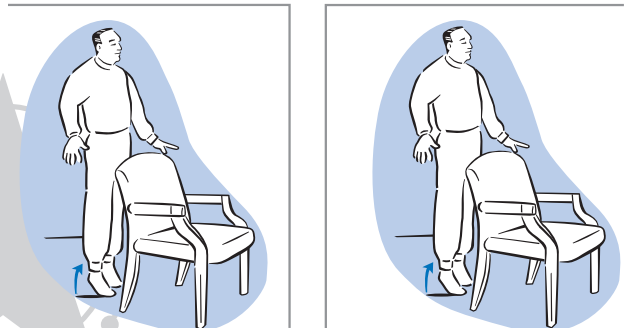
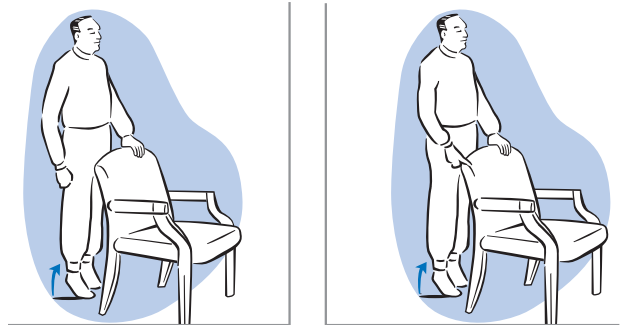
- ▶ Tie your shoes
- ▶ Clip your toenails
- ▶ Get in and out of the tub
- ▶ Reach items in the kitchen cupboards and on garage shelves
- ▶ Get dressed

Strength and balance activities help:

- ▶ Keep muscles and bones strong
- ▶ Your ability to lift and carry things like groceries, laundry, and grandchildren!
- ▶ Improve balance and posture
- ▶ Reduce likelihood of falls and accidents
- ▶ Reduce bone loss

Important tips before getting started:

- ▶ Don't overdo! Doing strength exercises too often can do more harm than good
- ▶ Start with support...from a chair; use one hand to help support yourself, and as you get stronger and achieve better balance, use only your finger for support; gradually let go completely; if you're really steady try doing the exercises with your eyes closed!
- ▶ Repeat each exercise 8 to 15 times, REST and do another set of 8 to 15 repetitions
- ▶ Remember to breathe!



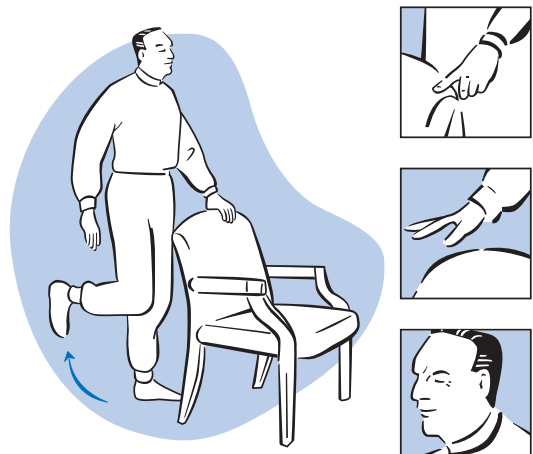
PLANTAR FLEXION (TIP TOE EXERCISE)

- ▶ Begin by standing straight
- ▶ Slowly move to your tip-toes, as high as possible
- ▶ Hold for 1 second, then lower your heels to the floor

KNEE FLEXION (KICK BEHINDS)

- ▶ Begin by standing straight
- ▶ Slowly bend your knee, lifting your foot behind you as far as possible

- ▶ Slowly lower your foot to the floor
- ▶ Pause, then repeat with the other leg





HIP FLEXION (SLOW MARCHING IN PLACE)

- ▶ Begin by standing straight
- ▶ Slowly bend one knee toward chest, without bending waist or hips
- ▶ Hold for 1 second, then slowly lower your foot to the floor
- ▶ Pause, then repeat with the other leg

HIP EXTENSION (SLOW SKATING IN PLACE)

- ▶ Begin by standing 12-18 inches from a table or chair, feet slightly apart



- ▶ Bend forward at hips at about a 45-degree angle
- ▶ Slowly lift one leg backwards (keep your leg straight and avoid leaning forward any further or pointing your toes)

- ▶ Hold for 1 second, then slowly lower your leg to the floor
- ▶ Pause, then repeat with other leg

SIDE LEG RAISE (CROQUET STICK KICKS)

- ▶ Begin by standing straight with your feet slightly apart, directly behind a table or chair
- ▶ Slowly lift one leg to the side 6-12 inches, keep your back and legs straight, foot facing forward
- ▶ Hold for 1 second, then slowly lower your leg to the floor
- ▶ Pause, then repeat with other leg



OTHER EXERCISES YOU CAN DO ANYTIME AND ANYWHERE INCLUDE:

- ▶ Walking heel-to-toe
- ▶ Standing on one foot
- ▶ Standing up and sitting down without using your hands

Source: Created by Geriatrics based on information from The U.S. National Institutes of Health National Institute on Aging, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults

Illustrations for Geriatrics by Gary Peck based on reference material from the National Institutes of Aging. To download a free patient handout of these and other balance exercises, log onto www.geri.com and click on Exercises in the lefthand navigation bar.