

Exercise to Improve Your Balance

Having good balance is important for many everyday activities, such as going up and down the stairs. It also helps you walk safely and avoid tripping and falling over objects in your way.

Each year, more than 2 million older Americans go to the emergency room because of fall-related injuries. A simple fall can cause a serious fracture of the arm, hand, ankle, or hip.

Balance exercises can help you prevent falls and avoid the disability that may result from falling. You can do balance exercises almost anytime, anywhere, and as often as you like as long as you have something sturdy nearby to hold on to for support.

Try these balance exercises: stand on one foot, walk heel to toe, and walk in a straight line with one foot in front of the other. A number of lower-body exercises - especially those that strengthen your legs and ankles - also can help improve your balance. These include the back leg raise, side leg raise, knee curl, and toe stand exercises, which can be found on the **Go4Life** website.

As you progress in your exercise routine, try adding the following challenges to help your balance even more:

- Start by holding on to a sturdy chair with both hands for support.
- When you are able, try holding on to the chair with only one hand.
- With time, hold on with only one finger, then with no hands at all.
- If you are really steady on your feet, try doing the balance exercises with your eyes closed.

Quick Tip

In the beginning, using a chair or the wall for support will help you work on your balance safely.

VISIT www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life

- Read more tips for adding physical activity to your day.
- Print useful tools.
- Share your exercise story.

