

BALANCING EXERCISES

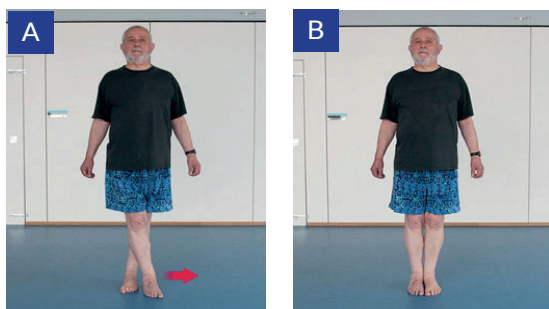
As we get older our balance declines, the good news is that this can be offset and improved by performing regular balance exercises. Initially, try these exercises 2-3 times a week, perhaps on the days you are not performing the strength exercises. Aim to build up the number of repetitions of each exercise over time as your balance improves.

Side Stepping



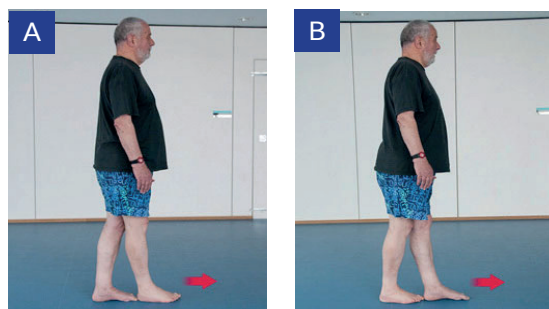
A) Stand tall, feet together, knees slightly bent. B) Step sideways in a slow controlled manner, moving one foot to the side first C) then the other to join it. Keep the head up, shoulders back and bottom tucked in. Avoid dropping and tilting the hips. Perform 10 steps each way, or step to each side of the room.

Grapevine



This exercise involves walking sideways by crossing one foot over the other. A) Stand tall feet together to start. Cross your right foot over the left, B) then bring your left foot to join it. Hold onto a wall or worktop for support if needed. Attempt 5 cross steps each side. The smaller the step, the more you challenge your balance. As your balance and confidence improves, aim to perform the exercises without support.

Tightrope Walk



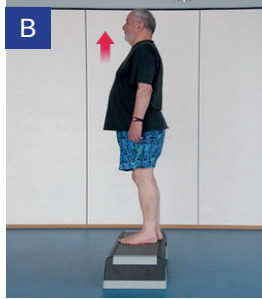
Stand tall, head up shoulders back, look forward and avoid looking down. A) Place the heel of the left foot directly in front of the toes on the right foot. B) Then do the same with the right foot – as if walking on a tightrope. Hold onto a wall or worktop for support if needed. Try to perform at least 5 steps, and gradually increase as able. As your balance and confidence improves, aim to perform the exercise without support.

One Leg Stand



A) Start by standing with your arms outstretched, gently holding on to a wall or worktop for support. B) Lift your left leg, have a slight bend in the right knee. Keep your hips level and bottom tucked in. Hold for 5-10 seconds, and then gently lower the left foot back to the floor. Swap and repeat on the right leg. Aim to perform 3-5 repetitions on each leg. As your balance and confidence improves, aim to perform the exercise without support.

Step Ups



Use a step, preferably near a railing or wall for support.

A) Step up with your right leg. B) Bring your left leg up to join it. C) Step down again, one leg at a time, to return to the start position. The key to building balance is to step up and down slowly, in a controlled manner. Perform up to 10 steps with each leg. As your balance and confidence improves, aim to perform the exercise without support from one side of the room to the other.

These exercises have kindly been contributed by Sarah Parr, Extended Scope Practitioner and Chartered Physiotherapist working with West Hertfordshire NHS Trust.

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