

Do you Have Good Balance

DO YOU/CAN YOU
DO THIS?

SHORT WELLNESS SELF-CHECKS

Test your own balance with two important TESTS.

TEST 1: Stand on one leg for as long as you can. The one-leg balancing test researcher believe may be an effective indicator of the probability of stroke in a person (where the ability to balance on one leg for 20 seconds is an indicator of a healthy brain).

TEST 2: The one-leg balancing test with eyes closed is another test that is very useful. In the standing on one leg with eyes closed test, men and women were able to hold the position for less than two seconds were three times more likely to die before the age of 66 than those who could hold it for 10 seconds or more. Those unable to do the test at all were more likely to die in the following 13 years (Study). A good score is the ability to balance for more than 10 seconds on one leg with eyes closed.

Why is balance important? Standing on one leg is a simple thing to fit into your daily routine and it can make a big difference to your life as you age! Working on your balance is also really good for building core strength and body alignment. Walking, running, lifting, and so much more require an individual to balance almost constantly. Most sports relies heavily on good balance. Balance is maintained by the coordination of multiple systems in the body working together. These include vestibular (inner ear), visual, and somatosensory (proprioceptive-nerves in muscles and joints) input. When working together, these systems can react to changes in the environment that may alter balance. Proprioception is the body's ability to sense limb and joint movement in space. Proprioceptive exercises such as balance training have been proven many times to decrease risk of injury. Specifically in terms of chronic ankle sprains, balance exercises used in rehabilitation regimens decrease the time it takes to return to play and prevent re-injury. Balance training is a major part of FitTcc programming. Balance exercises should be completed in a controlled environment. When first beginning, make sure you have something nearby to hold onto just in case. As with all exercises, it is best to begin with a simpler version and then make it difficult. A simple exercise is standing on one leg. Balance exercise is one of the four types of exercise recommended by the ACSM and AHA, along with [strength](#), [endurance](#) and [flexibility](#) (See exercises and more at AHA). You don't need to buy expensive equipment to improve your balance; plus you can do these at your desk. Lift your foot off the ground completely-90 degree angle of thigh to body. From there, you can play around with the position of your lifted leg—holding it behind you, in front of you, to the side or for a greater challenge, moving the lifted leg while you balance on the other leg and perform upper body movements. To make it harder close your eyes Try adding 5 or 10 minutes of balance exercises to your workouts three times a week. How can you tell if you are getting better? When you can maintain your balance during the various exercises (or the balance-training tests above) for longer periods of time. When I am evaluating someone for an injury, I typically ask them to stand on one leg so I can see what their foot, ankle, and hip stability looks like. Usually, before they even try it, they say “I have bad balance.” Often times, poor balance is at the root of their problem! If you can't control yourself while balancing on one foot, it is going to be difficult to dynamically perform repetitive motions like running and athletics. In a single leg balance test more lean during the test suggests more lumbo-pelvic instability and possible low back dysfunction. When looking at the lower body motion in foot, ankle, knee, or hip may indicate instability. Conditioning of those areas are warranted.

Why does balance deteriorate as we age? The inner ear as a lot to do with your balance and it changes as you age. As you get older the balance structures in your inner ear start to deteriorate – the number of hair cells in your inner ear decrease, and even the amount of blood flow you get into your inner ear begins to change.