

Balance Tests and Exercises



Know Your Joints
Muscle and Joint Care
Suggestions

Balance is important in physical performance and preventing injuries. Since muscle function and muscle balance help absorb the forces that impact the joints, muscles that work well may protect joints from excessive wear and tear. Regular exercise promotes good muscle function and may, over time, prevent osteoarthritis. We incorporate balance training in most of our fitness programming. Take these tests to see if your balance is sufficient. If not use these tests as exercises to improve your balance.

- 1. Stand with your feet touching side by side and close your eyes:** You should be able to stand for > 30 seconds without swaying or losing your balance. Proper body alignment, or good posture, can help prevent excess strain on your joints, muscles, and spine. This alleviates pain and reduces the likelihood of injury.
- 2. Stand with your feet tandem (one foot in front of the other) and close your eyes:** You should be able to stand for > 30 seconds without swaying or losing your balance. This is a simple task, but many people have difficulty with it, especially when balance is overall poor.
- 3. Stand on one leg:** You should be able to stand for > 30 seconds without swaying or losing your balance. If you're close to this goal, great!
- 4. Stand on one leg and close your eyes:** You should be able to stand for > 20 seconds without swaying or losing your balance. The ability to complete even one or two of these successfully is a great place to start. However, if you have trouble, it's time to seek a medical professional's guidance. The balance tests described above can also be used as exercises to improve your balance.

If you were unable to complete any of the above balance tests then you should proactively work on your balance. Balance is important for all ages, whether young or old. It's necessary in order to perform basic tasks like walking on a busy street or moving throughout your home. Having good balance and ability to catch yourself after a wrong step is crucial, especially during the winter months. As we get older we start to lose our proprioceptive feedback and our balance starts to decline. Therefore, it is important to test your balance and see whether it is in top shape or if you need to take action to improve it. The CDC reports 2.8 million people treated in the ER department each year for injuries related to falling. Balance and posture go hand in hand. For this reason, it is essential to find ways to help improve posture in order to, in turn, improve balance.