

EXERCISES TO IMPROVE BALANCE AND STRENGTH FOR SENIORS

As we get older, our balance deteriorates, which makes carrying out daily activities like walking and shopping more difficult. It also means seniors are at a higher risk of falling – almost a third of people aged 65 and above fall at least once a year, increasing to half of those aged 80 and above.

As we age, our bone density decreases, and falls can pose a greater risk of fractures and serious injuries. Sadly, falls are the most common cause of injury related deaths to people over the age of 75.

Fortunately, it is possible to improve your balance. Doing regular balance and strength exercises helps to improve your motor control and muscle strength, which can reduce your risk of falling.

We recommend doing the following exercises at least twice a week, but they can be carried out daily safely.

Make sure to consult your doctor or a certified professional before partaking in exercise.

BALANCE EXERCISES FOR SENIORS

1. *Single Limb Stance*

For this exercise, set up near something you can hold on to, such as a chair, table, or kitchen worktop. As your balance improves, you can progress to doing this exercise without assistance.

- Stand with your feet hip width apart, arms by your sides, looking straight forward.
- Soften your left knee and lift your foot so it is completely off the ground, so you are balancing your weight on your right leg. Make sure to hold your weight straight over your ankles.
- Hold your foot around ankle height for 10 seconds before switching to the other leg.
- Start with 3 lots of 10 second repetitions each side, and work your way up each week until each rep is 1 minute.



2. Clock Reach

For this exercise, imagine that you are stood in the centre of a clock; 12 o'clock is directly in front of you, 3 and 9 o'clock is to your sides, and 6 o'clock is to your back.

- Stand upright next to a chair, countertop, or another stable object that you can hold onto.
- Holding onto the surface with your right hand, lift your left foot off the ground.
- While your foot is off the ground, extend your left arm so that it reaches towards 12 o'clock.
- Slowly move your arm horizontally so that it points to 9 o'clock then 6 o'clock, before moving back round. Keep your foot off the ground throughout.
- Put down your arm and leg and repeat on the other side. Your right arm will point to 3 o'clock rather than 9.
- Start with 3 reps per side and work your way up to 5. You can slow down the movement to make this more challenging.



3. Staggered Stance

This is a great exercise to specifically help improve balance when walking.

- Set up near an object you can hold onto, such as a chair or worktop.
- Place a piece of tape, string, or something similar, on the ground to act as a centre line.
- Stand on your 'line' with your feet together, hands by your sides, and chin and chest up.
- Step forward, placing your right foot on the line so it is directly in front of your left foot.
- Hold this position for 10 seconds, making sure to balance evenly over both feet.
- Return your right foot to your starting position and repeat with the left foot.
- Start with 3 reps of 10 seconds each side and build the time up to 30 seconds.



4. Knee Marching

As well as helping to improve balance, knee marches can build muscle strength in the ankles, hips, and legs. The slower you do the exercise, the more challenging it is, so you can increase the difficulty each week by slowing down.

- Stand facing forward with your feet together and arms at your sides.
- Raise one knee up as high as feels comfortable and then lower it down. As you bring the knee up, shift your weight onto the other leg.
- Repeat on the other side, as if you were marching.
- Repeat 10 times per leg for best results, or up to 2 minutes straight if you feel up to it.



4. Side Leg Raise

- Standing behind a chair or other object you can hold onto with your feet slightly apart.
- Slowly lift your left leg to the side, making sure to keep your toes facing forward. Your back should remain straight and you should be looking straight ahead.
- Hold your leg up for 10 seconds before slowly lowering back to the floor.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Start with 3 reps of 10 second holds, increasing up to 30 seconds each rep.



STRENGTH EXERCISES FOR SENIORS

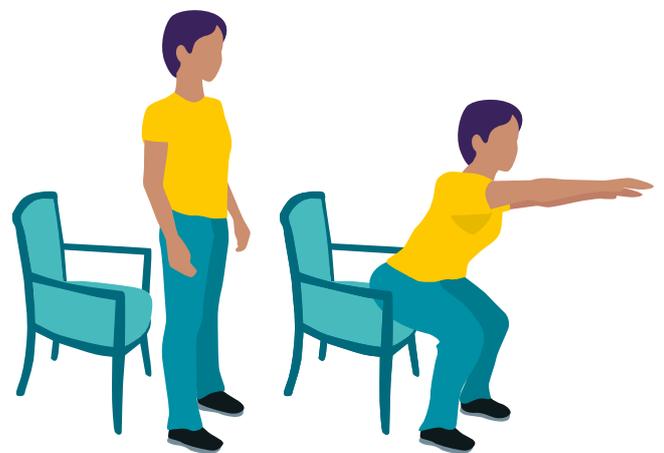
Strength exercises focus on improving the strength of your muscles and bones, helping to boost endurance and counteract any frailty that can come with aging. These types of exercises can reduce the risk of health issues such as osteoporosis and arthritis. They can also help to improve your balance.

We recommend doing the following exercises 2-3 times per week. Start off with 10 reps for each exercise and work your way up until you can do 3 sets of 10.

These exercises can all be done at home with no equipment. As you improve, you can add light weights such as a water bottle to make the exercises more challenging.

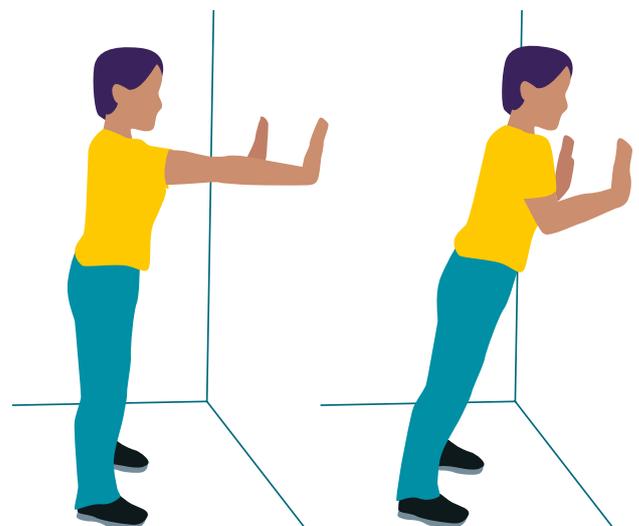
1. Chair Squats

- Stand in front of your chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and feet facing slightly out.
- Roll your shoulders and down away from the ears. This will help you to maintain a straight spine.
- Look straight ahead and take a deep breathe in and tighten your ab muscles. Bend your knees and sink your hips back and down until you touch the chair without sitting down. Keeping your arms out in front will help with your balance.
- Squeeze your glutes and straighten your legs back up to standing position.



2. Wall Push Ups

- Place your hands on the wall, shoulder width apart, at chest height.
- Take a step back while keeping your hands on the wall.
- Bend your elbows and slowly lower your chest towards the wall until your elbows are at a 90 degree angle.
- Push the wall to return back to the starting position.
- This is one rep.



3. Glute Bridge

- Lie flat on your back with arms straight by your side, knees bent hip-width apart, and feet flat on the floor.
- Engage your core and glutes as you lift your hips up towards the ceiling so your shoulders, hips and knees are in a straight line. Your shin and thigh should roughly be at a 90 degree angle.
- Hold for a couple of seconds squeezing your glutes before slowly returning to the start position.
- Slowly return to starting position.



4. Bird Dog Holds

- Start on all fours, with your knees below your hips and your hands below your shoulders. Your head should be facing the floor.
- Engage your core and keep your back straight. At the same time, lift up your left arm until it's in front of you, level with your shoulders, and push out your right leg until it's raised straight out behind you.
- Hold for 5 seconds before lowering and then swap to the right arm and left leg.

