[IMAGE]

Stay Balanced With Exercise

By Editorial Staff

Balance is a major issue throughout life, but particularly with age. As we get older, lack of balance increases fall risk, which can prove debilitating and even fatal. Fortunately, optimizing balance is easy, even for seniors. Check out these simple exercises courtesy of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that are great for people of all ages:

- *Single-leg standing:* Stand behind a sturdy chair. Holding onto the chair, stand on one foot for 10 seconds at a time, repeating 10-15 times on the left leg and repeating the entire routine with the right leg.
- *Heel-to-toe walks*: With the heel of one foot positioned just in front of your other foot (so your two feet almost touch), walk forward step by step, moving the rear foot ahead of the front foot with each step until the heel of the front foot again nearly touches the toes of the back foot. Look forward at an object in the distance to help maintain balance. Walk 20 total steps.
- *The balance walk:* For this exercise, walk in a straight line, bending at the knee with each step. Alternate which leg you bend with each step (make sure it's always the back leg). Keep your arms out by your sides and focus forward to help maintain balance. Walk 20 total steps.
- Leg raises: You can do two versions of this exercise, but both involve that sturdy chair you utilized for single-leg standing. Position yourself behind the chair, holding it for stability, and perform back leg raises (slowly lift one leg straight back without bending the knee or pointing the toes) or side leg raises (slowly lift one leg out to the side, keeping your toes facing forward). For both exercises, hold each movement for 1 second and repeat 10-15 times for each leg. Make sure to keep your stable leg slightly bent and your back straight to avoid injury.

We take balance for granted until it fails us. Include these exercises in your daily health and wellness routine and failure will never be an option. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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