

# The May Wellness Challenge: Better Balance

Having good balance is one of those things that you don't really appreciate it, until you don't have it. For most seniors, they begin to notice changes in their balance. It becomes a thing one thinks about. We know how important balance is to our quality of life. Whether it is walking through winter weather or simply navigating stairs, we know the importance of balance to prevent falls. But better balance also means we are able to stay active, enjoying activities that keep our heart and minds healthy.



The goal of **balance** exercises is to improve stability and coordination throughout your body. Balance helps you stay upright as you do activities like walking, biking, climbing stairs, dancing, and walking a tightrope 😊. These strengthening and stability exercises also keep our posture strong, so we sit and stand upright as we age.

Research has shown the significant role that balance exercises play in an older person's quality of life. For instance, a study from 2016 found that older adults who began a regular balance exercise program improved their ability to move unassisted.

Lastly, better balance improves one's confidence and self-esteem. It's never too late to improve one's balance.

The attached exercises are meant to help you balance better. Take your time as you start them, and be sure you have something nearby to grab onto in case you lose your balance while doing the exercise. Remember to stop if you feel pain. If the pain lasts for days or weeks, talk to your doctor.

These exercises are intended to support the natural alignment of your body. Since your muscles and bones wear down naturally as you grow older, performing these exercises regularly can help you maintain or improve the lifestyle you desire.

## The Challenge - 5 Steps to Better Balance

1. **Practice Balance Every Day.** Try each of the eight exercises. Then pick THREE that you will do every day for the month of May. If you miss a day, no problem, just pick it up the next day. Since improving your balance doesn't happen overnight, consistency is the only way people get better with balance. Side note: Leg strength is so important for good balance. Try to include the Sit to Stands as one of your three exercises.
2. **Incorporate Balance Exercises into your Every Day Routine.** Try standing on one foot while waiting for your hot coffee or while brushing your teeth. Do your sit to stands when you first turn on the TV. If you attach an exercise with another habit or activity you are already doing, you are more likely to remember to do it!

3. **Keep Improving.** When you begin an exercise, try to do it 5 times or hold for 20 seconds. As you progress, increase the number of times you do an exercise - try 7, then 8, then 10, or increase your time to 30 or 40 seconds.
4. **See your doctor.** When is the last time you have had your eyes or ears tested? Are you taking 3 or more medications on a daily basis? You may be asking what do these questions have to do with balance? Well there is a link between poor vision, inner ear problems and how taking many medications can alter your balance. If you are struggling to improve your balance, talk to your doctor and see if there are medications or inner ear, eye problems that may affect your balance.
5. **Join us for one of our Senior Exercise Classes** on Tuesday at 1:00 p.m. or Thursday at 9:45 a.m. Each class is about 45 minutes. We spend time strengthening our heart through walking movements and we also incorporate exercises for strengthening our muscles and improving our balance and posture. All the exercises can be done standing or sitting in a chair. It's fun to exercise together.

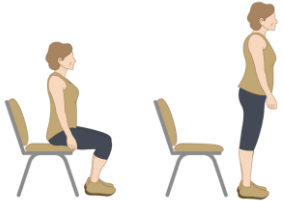
Enjoy the blessing of Better Balance!

# Exercises for Better Balance



## 1: Standing Toe-Taps

**Instructions:** Hold onto a sturdy surface for support initially. Then, using an exercise step or the bottom step of a set of stairs, tap your foot on the step and back down to the floor. Repeat on the other leg. Perform 10-15 times on each leg.



## Exercise 2: Repetitive Sit To Stand

**Instructions:** Begin by sitting in a sturdy chair without wheels and preferably with arm rest. Then, stand from the chair (using hands if needed) and then return to sitting. Perform 5 times, working your way up to 10 times. This is a key exercise to improve leg strength.



## Exercise 3: Heel Raises

**Instructions:** Begin by finding a sturdy chair without wheels or you can use a counter space in the kitchen. Hold onto the sturdy surface for support initially. Then, raise up on your tip-toes so your heels lift from the floor. Repeat this exercise 10-15 times.



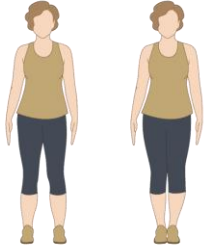
## Exercise 4: Toe Raises

**Instructions:** Begin by finding a sturdy chair without wheels or you can use a counter space in the kitchen. Hold onto the sturdy surface for support initially. Then, allow your toes to raise up towards the ceiling. Your heels will stay planted on the floor. Repeat this exercise 10-15 times. This help us pick up our feet as we walk, less risk for tripping on a rug!



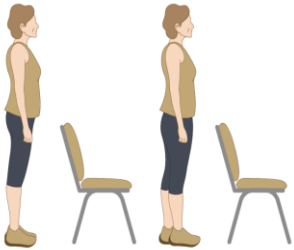
## Exercise 5: Side Leg Raises

**Instructions:** Begin by finding a sturdy chair without wheels or you can use a counter space in the kitchen. Hold onto the sturdy surface for support initially. Lift one leg out to your side. Then, lower the leg down to the floor. Then, perform on the other side. Repeat this exercise 10-15 times. This is a key exercise to improve hip strength.



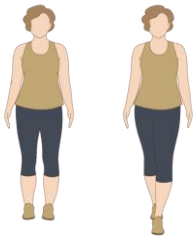
### **Exercise 6: Standing With Feet Together**

*Instructions:* This may be done by holding onto a sturdy chair for balance support initially. Once you've gained stability, bring your feet together to narrow your base of support. Try to maintain the 'feet together' stance for 30 seconds without the support of a chair. Once you've mastered this one, try the next one.



### **Exercise 7: Semi-Tandem Stance**

*Instructions:* Begin by finding a sturdy chair without wheels or you can use a counter space in the kitchen. Hold onto the sturdy surface for support initially. Then, bring your feet into a stride stance by moving one foot forward. Once you feel steady, slowly let go of the chair. Try to maintain balance in this position for 30 seconds. Once you've mastered this, try the next one.



### **Exercise 8: Tandem Stance**

*Instructions:* This may be done by holding onto a sturdy chair for balance support initially. Once you've gained stability, bring your feet into a heel-toe position. Once you feel steady, slowly let go of the chair. Try to maintain balance for 10 seconds. **\*\*This one is more advanced and shouldn't be attempted by those with moderate to severe balance deficits without a physical therapist present.**



### **Exercise 9: Single Leg Stance**

*Instructions:* Begin by finding a sturdy chair without wheels or you can use a counter space in the kitchen. Hold onto the sturdy surface for support initially. Then, balance on one leg. Once you feel steady, slowly let go of the chair. Try to maintain balance for 10 seconds working your way up to 30 seconds if you can.