

BALANCE-FIT

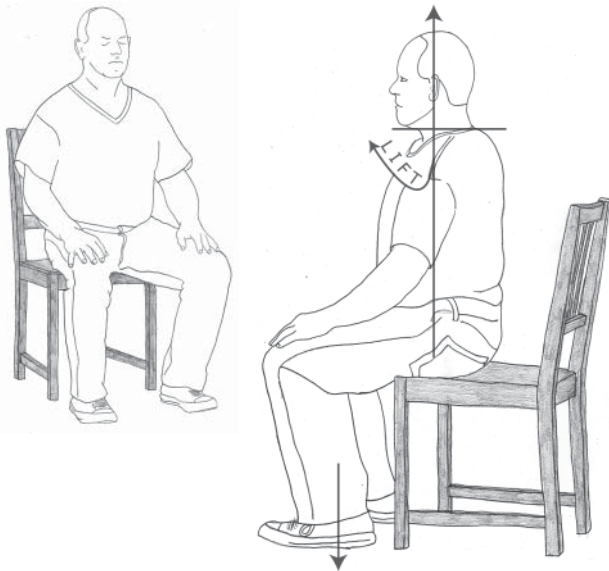
SIXTEEN EXERCISES FOR BALANCE FITNESS

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SIXTEEN EXERCISES FOR BALANCE FITNESS

POSTURE & BREATH [1]

core strength, warm-up



METHOD:

Sit on the front edge of the chair. Relax mind and body while maintaining awareness of posture. Feel the breath moving in and out of the body and notice any effect on posture.

TRAINING POINTS:

- Feet flat, shoulder width apart.
- Ear, shoulder, and hip socket vertically aligned.
- Rest the palms on thighs or abdomen.
- Head level.
- Breast bone projected mildly forward and up.
- Eyes open or closed.

DURATION:

About 1 minute

FUNCTION:

Sitting activates the core postural muscles. The core muscles (abdominal, back muscles, & others) stabilize the spine and hip. That is essential for postural control and support.

BODY LEAN [2]

core strength, balance



METHOD:

Cross the arms and rotate the trunk in a circle. Repeat in the opposite direction. Place the hands on the thighs or hold the sides of the chair if there is any doubt about balance control.

TRAINING POINTS:

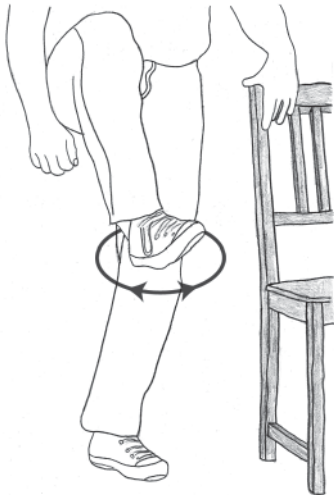
- Feet parallel, flat on the floor, shoulder width apart.
- Keep the trunk straight.
- Allow the hips to roll around on the support bones.

REPETITIONS:

- One set of eight (1 – 8), clockwise & counter-clockwise

FUNCTION:

This exercise builds core strength, postural awareness, and independence of movement between the upper and lower body.

ANKLE ROTATION [3]*flexibility, strength***METHOD:**

Stand or sit; rotate the ankle in a circle. Think of drawing a circle with the toe. Confine the motion to the ankle as much as possible and try for a wide range of motion. Stay relaxed. Use a chair for stability if necessary.

TRAINING POINTS:

- Maximum range of motion.
- If standing, keep the knee elevated so that it is parallel with the floor.
- If standing, the support leg knee should be slightly bent.
- Maintain a relaxed upright posture throughout the movement.
- Concentrate movement in the ankle.

REPETITIONS:

- Two sets of Eight (2 – 8)

FUNCTION:

The ankle is the first joint to become active when compensating for a change in balance. Ankle mobility and strength is critical for accurate balance adjustments. Performed seated the primary benefits are core strength and ankle flexibility. Performed standing, there are additional gains in strength, balance, and concentration.

SEATED KNEE LIFT [4]*strength, flexibility*

Hip strength and flexibility are required in many different situations.

**METHOD:**

Draw the knee as far upward and toward the chest as possible then repeat with the other leg.

TRAINING POINTS:

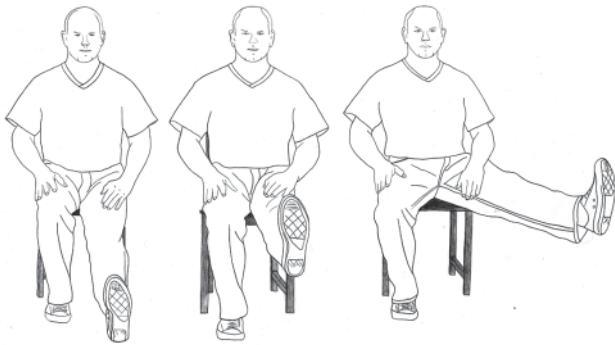
- Remain upright.
- Lift the chest and project the breastbone forward.
- Exhale when lifting the leg.
- Look straight ahead, eyes and head level.

REPETITIONS:

- Two sets of eight (2 – 8)

FUNCTION:

The primary cause of falls in people over the age of fifty is insufficient hip and leg strength. This exercise builds hip and leg strength as well as hip flexibility. Flexibility in this range is necessary for movements such as getting off the ground.

LEG LIFT [5]*hip strength, flexibility***METHOD:**

Begin by extending one leg fully forward with the knee as straight as possible, ankle flexed and the heel resting on the floor. Raise the leg to horizontal, swing the leg to the side and then back to the front again. Return to the floor and repeat.

TRAINING POINTS:

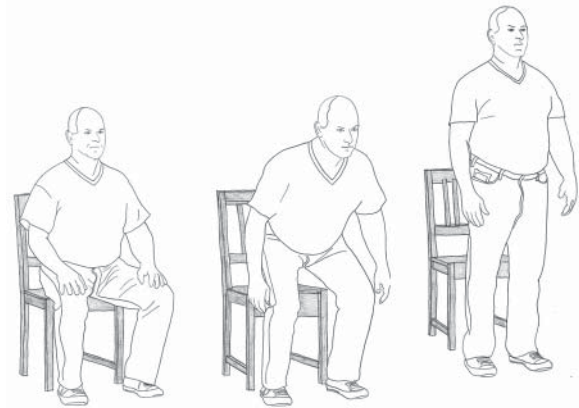
- Do not allow the hips to shift on the chair.
- Maintain an upright posture.
- Keep the knee straight throughout the exercise.
- Keep the support leg firmly anchored on the floor.

REPETITIONS:

Do six times with one leg and then switch to the other leg. Repeat for a total of two sets of six repetitions (2 – 6)

FUNCTION:

This exercise will strengthen essential hip muscles and also promote hip flexibility. It is one of the best exercises in this series for promoting balance control in situations where the feet are forced close together.

STAND & SIT [6]*strength, balance***METHOD:**

Alternately, sit and stand. If lack of strength or joint pain makes this difficult, try raising the seat height with a pillow. Begin by positioning the hips toward the front edge of the chair. Next, lean forward. Make sure that the head remains level. As the nose comes over the toes use the momentum generated by the forward lean to stand. Come to a fully erect posture. Perform the actions in one continuous motion. Sit and repeat.

TRAINING POINTS:

- Start with hips forward on the chair.
- Try to keep the head level.
- Control the descent when sitting, particularly the first six inches above the chair seat.
- Sit on a pillow if you need extra height until your strength improves!

REPETITIONS:

Two sets of eight (2 – 8)

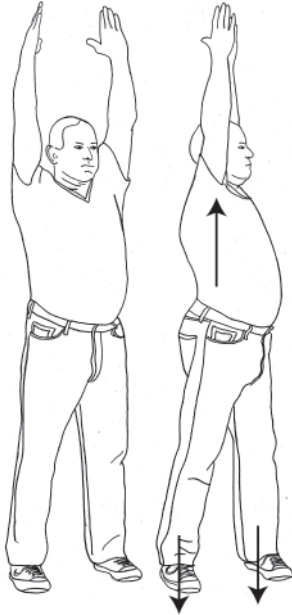
FUNCTION:

The stand and sit is a strength and balance exercise. It is one of the best exercises in the routine for increasing the strength of the hips and legs. Repeat this exercise ten to twenty times a day for dramatic results. The first six inches above the chair seat is the zone of maximum effort and requires the most strength, control, and effort.

STRETCH AND TWIST [7]

flexibility, balance

METHOD:



Stand, inhale, and raise the arms. Slowly turn the chest and hips to the left and then to the right. Return to center and lower the arms. Repeat.

TRAINING POINTS:

- Stretch the side ribs.
- Keep the knees slightly bent.
- Maintain awareness of contact with the ground through the heels and the balls of the feet.
- Keep the head level.
- Breathe throughout the movement.

REPETITIONS:

➤ 2 - 3

FUNCTION:

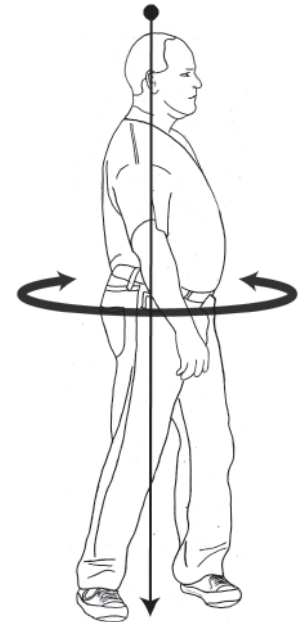
When extending and twisting tension increases through the axis of the body and attention is diverted from the support base. If the feet are not well grounded the points of contact will become loose. The loss of support points in the feet can undermine stability.

BODY TURN [8]

flexibility, balance

METHOD:

Place the feet hip width apart. Rotate the body left and right around the midline vertical axis. Stay completely relaxed and allow the arms to swing freely.



TRAINING POINTS:

- Feet parallel, flat on the floor, hip width apart.
- Place awareness in the hip rotation.
- Feet firmly on the ground.
- Feel the mid-line vertical axis.
- Keep the head and gaze level.
- Maintain a relaxed upright posture throughout the movement.
- DO NOT LEAN

REPETITIONS:

➤ 15 – 20 in each direction

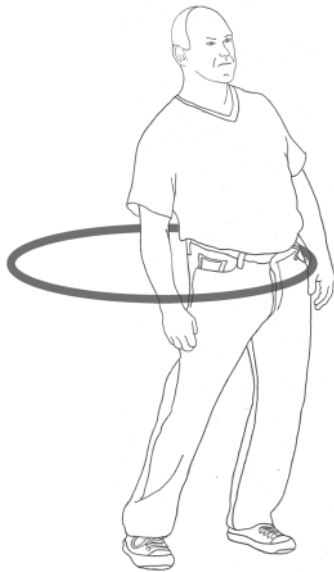
FUNCTION:

This is a balance control exercise. Twisting motions put tension in the body making it more vulnerable to balance loss. As the body stops and changes direction the balance must be stabilized. A tendency to lean while turning increases the instability

We are more susceptible to falls whenever the direction of a movement suddenly changes. Abrupt stops and acute direction changes require extra balance control.

HIP ROTATION [9]*flexibility, balance***METHOD:**

Rotate the hips as if working a hula hoop. Allow the hips to swing freely. Keep the feet firmly on the ground. Work to the left and the right.

**TRAINING POINTS:**

- Feet parallel, flat on the floor, shoulder width apart or slightly wider.
- Place awareness in the hip.
- Feet firmly on the ground.
- Arms free.
- Level the head and gaze.
- Maintain a relaxed upright posture throughout the movement.

REPETITIONS:

➤ 15 – 20 in each direction

FUNCTION:

This balance exercise trains the hip and ankle joints to work together smoothly for stability. The more freely the hip can shift the better the compensation for changes in balance. This movement strengthens the hips and legs and increases hip flexibility.

CALF RAISE [10]*strength, balance***METHOD:**

Stand with the feet about four inches apart. Take appropriate safety precautions (chair, wall) if there is any uncertainty about the balance. Press up on the balls of the feet and then release down slowly. Perform the entire movement slowly, with control.

TRAINING POINTS:

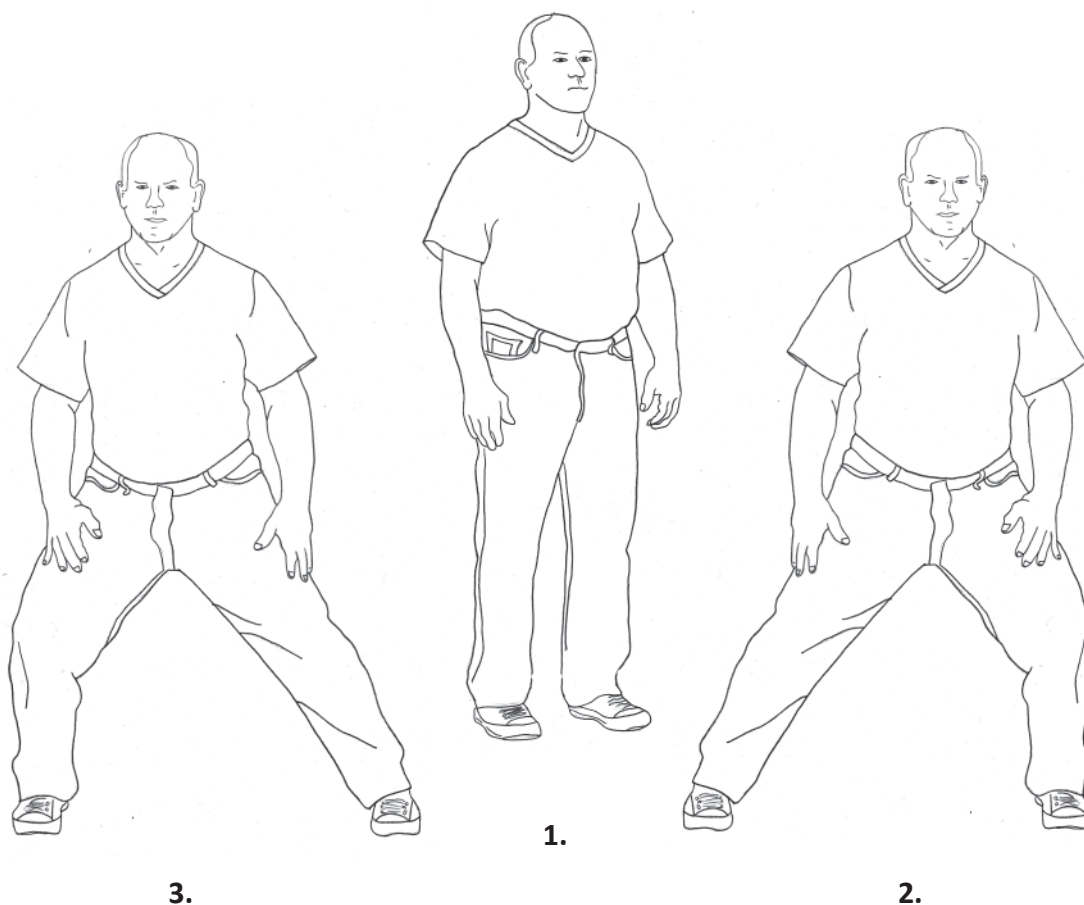
- Maintain vertical posture throughout.
- The action should be smooth with no explosive moments.
- Keep the toes on the ground throughout the movement.

REPETITIONS:

Two sets of eight (2 – 8)

FUNCTION:

This is a balance and strengthening exercise. A strong and flexible calf muscle is essential in order to control movement of the body backwards, over the heels. Negotiating steps or any inclined surface requires a strong and flexible calf muscle in order to prevent tipping backwards.

LATERAL SHIFT [11]*gait, strength, balance***METHOD:**

Practice stepping wide to the right and left from a hip width stance. Shift the weight into the leg and hip with each step as illustrated.

TRAINING POINTS:

- Pay attention to posture. Do not lean forward
- Go slowly at first and then more quickly.
- Maintain a level gaze.
- Control any tendency for the hips to rotate.
- Do not restrict the arms - let them swing naturally.

DURATION:

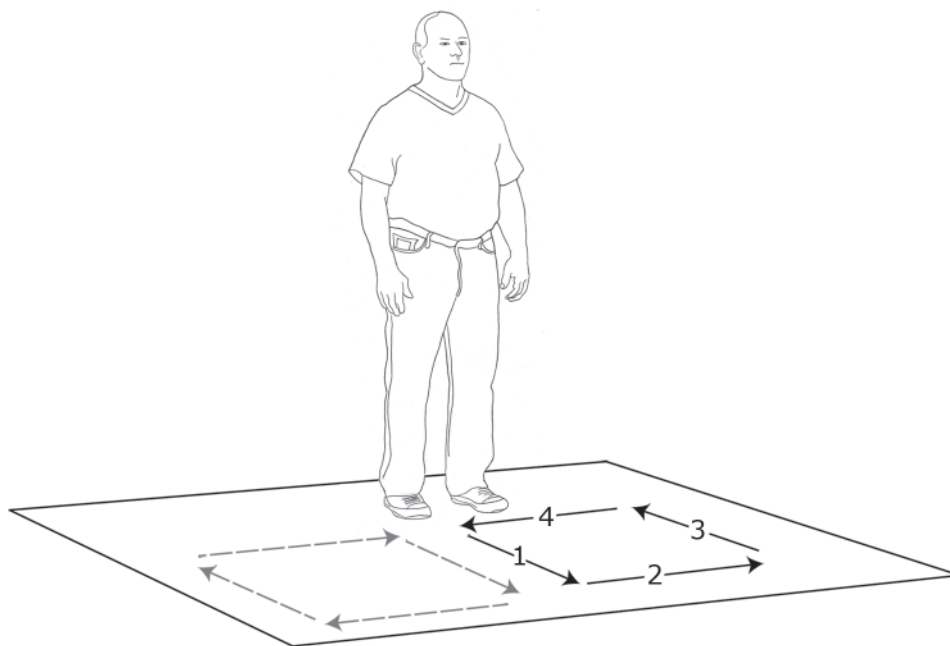
➤ 30 seconds - 1 minute

FUNCTION:

The exercise builds strength and control in lateral movements.

BOX STEP [12]

gait, strength, balance



METHOD:

Begin by standing with the feet shoulder width and parallel.

Rhythm: 1 – Together: 2 - Together: 3 - Together, 4 - Together: REPEAT

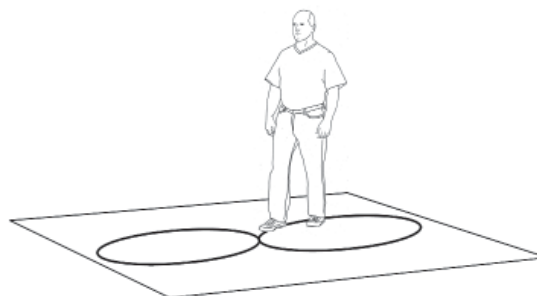
- FORWARD with the LEFT FOOT - FORWARD with the RIGHT FOOT.
- STEP LEFT with the LEFT FOOT - LEFT with the RIGHT FOOT.
- STEP BACK with the LEFT FOOT - BACK with the RIGHT FOOT.
- STEP RIGHT with the RIGHT FOOT - RIGHT with the LEFT FOOT.

TRAINING POINTS:

- Pay attention to posture.
- Maintain a level gaze.
- Feel the hips carry the body, lift the feet.
- Let the arms swing.
- Reverse direction occasionally.

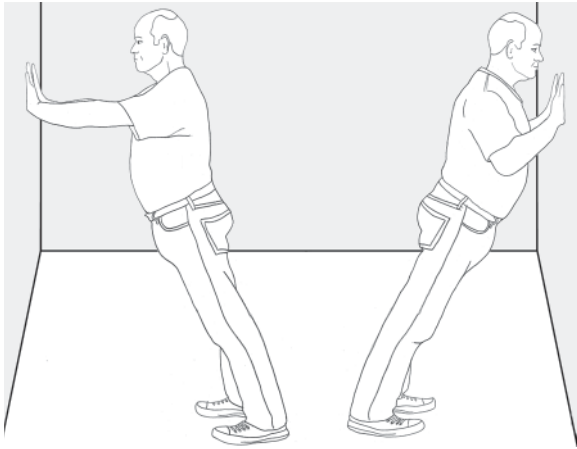
REPETITIONS:

- Two sets 1 minute each.



FUNCTION:

The box step combines and strengthens movement in all of the primary directions - front, side, and back. Practice it frequently. Another powerful balance training pattern is the figure eight.

WALL PUSHUP [13]*strength, flexibility***METHOD:**

Stand facing a wall with feet parallel. Place the palms on the wall with the fingers pointed up. Step back until the body is inclined at an angle. On an inhalation bend the elbows and lower the body toward the wall. Exhale while pushing back to the starting position. Repeat

TRAINING POINTS:

- Keep the back straight.
- Keep the heels on the ground
- Do the exercise slowly for maximum benefit.
- The knees should be straight.

REPETITIONS:

- Two sets of eight (2 – 8)

FUNCTION:

The wall pushup will build upper body strength. It can also help in restoring the natural alignment of the head. The calf muscles will be stretched as the body is lowered toward the wall. Pushing strength is part of what is necessary in order to get up off of the ground. Thrusting the hands out in front strongly is also a defensive measure in the event of a fall.

SHOULDER RELEASE [14]*flexibility***METHOD:**

Sit or stand. Reach behind the back with both arms. Do not be concerned if the hands are not capable of touching or grasping. Repeat by reversing the arms

TRAINING POINTS:

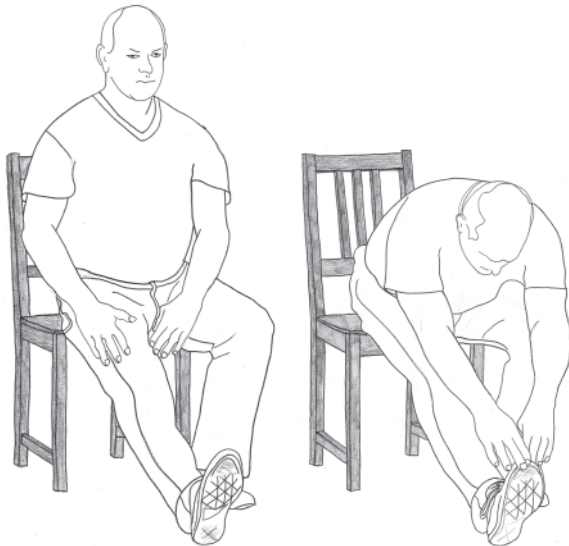
- Lift the chest and project the breast bone forward.
- Breathe normally.
- Relax the neck so that the head can move freely.
- Roll the top elbow toward the ceiling and the bottom elbow toward the rear.

REPETITIONS:

- Two times on each side, 15 – 30 seconds

FUNCTION:

This exercise restores and sustains independence of shoulder movement and flexibility. It is used as an evaluation standard for upper body flexibility. This exercise will help to keep the rotator cuff muscles loose. Adequate range of motion and flexibility in the shoulders reduces postural strain and distortion when performing complex upper body and limb movements.

HAMSTRING EXTENSION [15]*flexibility***METHOD:**

Sit on the front edge of a chair. Extend one leg completely. Flex the foot (toes toward knee). Begin by sliding both hands down the top of the outstretched leg. When a limit is reached remain for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

TRAINING POINTS:

- The extended leg knee must remain straight. The value of the exercise is lost if the knee bends.
- Breathe and relax completely. Allow the head to hang loosely.
- The point of maximum stretch will vary (back of knee, calf, low back, middle hamstring) depending on the flexibility of all of the body tissues involved.

REPETITIONS:

➤ Two times on each side, 15 – 30 seconds

FUNCTION:

Restores and retains flexibility in the backs of the thighs (hamstrings), calf, and low back. This is used as a standard measure of lower body flexibility.

ARM WRAP [16]*cool down, flexibility***METHOD:**

Sit. Reach as far around the body with the arms as possible. Repeat and reverse the arms.

TRAINING POINTS:

- Wrap the arms as far around as possible without straining.
- Maintain the integrity of the seated posture.

DURATION:

➤ 5 – 10 seconds

FUNCTION:

This movement will increase flexibility in the shoulders and regulates breathing.