

Exercises to improve balance and muscle strength

Important: Please read our *Before and after exercise* fact sheet (2) before you start this routine. If you have had a few falls already, it's best that you talk to your doctor who may refer you to a specialist clinic - to ensure you get all the advice you need.

Who: You should carry out these exercises if:

- you've noticed that your balance isn't as good as it was
- you are new to exercise
- you are over the age of about 65 and not exercising regularly

Improving your balance is especially important before you start a new activity like brisk walking. The confidence you gain

will allow you to benefit from the exercise without risking a slip or fall.

Why: We usually fall over when we get older because our balance, coordination and muscle strength aren't so good, but research has proven that specific stability and balance exercises can help. People with osteoporosis or at risk of fractures are more likely to break bones as a result of a fall so improving your muscle strength and balance can help to keep you safe and steady on your feet. Once you feel steadier your confidence will grow - we know that people who are less fearful are less likely to fall.

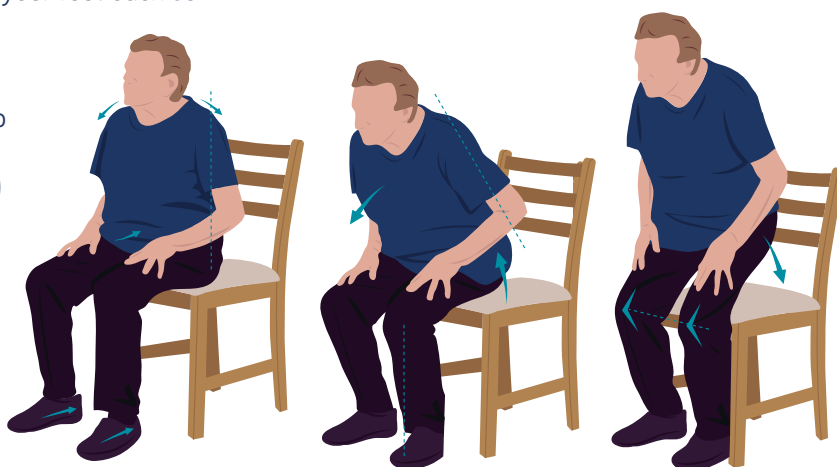
What you need: An armless chair and a sturdy support like a kitchen unit or wall to hold on to. To progress your balance exercises, try not to hold on, but keep your hands near a support should you need it.

When and how: Do these exercises on at least two or three days a week. Slowly move into the position and hold for the recommended time. Remember to repeat on the other leg where needed, and don't worry too much if you wobble! You need to challenge your balance to improve it, so a slight wobble is good!

1

Sit to stand

- Sit on the front of an armless chair with your spine tall, your lower tummy muscles pulled in and your shoulders down and relaxed
- Keep your heels on the floor and slide your feet back so your toes are underneath your knees
- Lean forward a little from your hips, keep your spine long and push up in to standing, trying not to use your hands (use your hands for support if needed)
- To sit down, feel the chair against the back of your legs, bend at the knees and lower slowly down with control, taking care not to bump down
- Aim to repeat the move ten times



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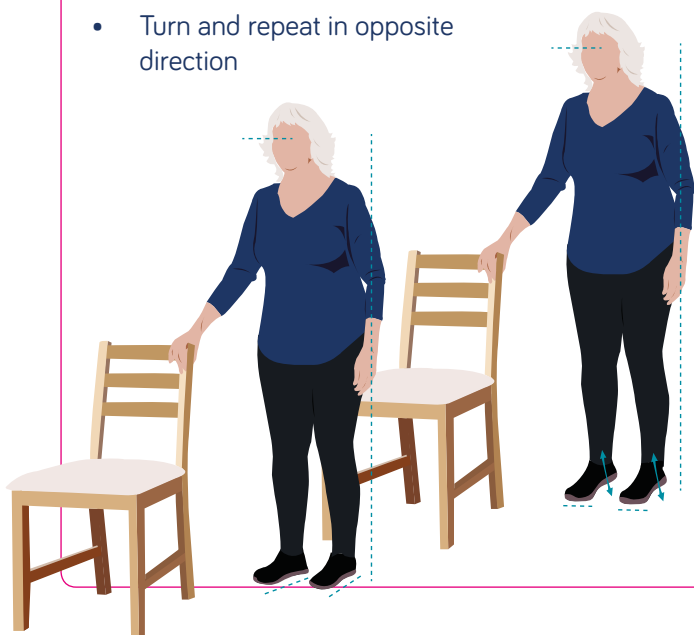
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Heel raises and toe walking

- Stand near to a stable surface with one hand on the support if required
- Stand with an upright posture, looking straight ahead
- Lift your heels up and keep your weight through your big toes and second toes, don't let your ankles roll outwards
- Hold for up to three seconds
- Lower your heels back to the floor
- Repeat ten times

Progression

- To progress this exercise to toe walking, with your heels up take ten small steps forwards on your toes, looking ahead, not down, then lower heels to ground
- Turn and repeat in opposite direction



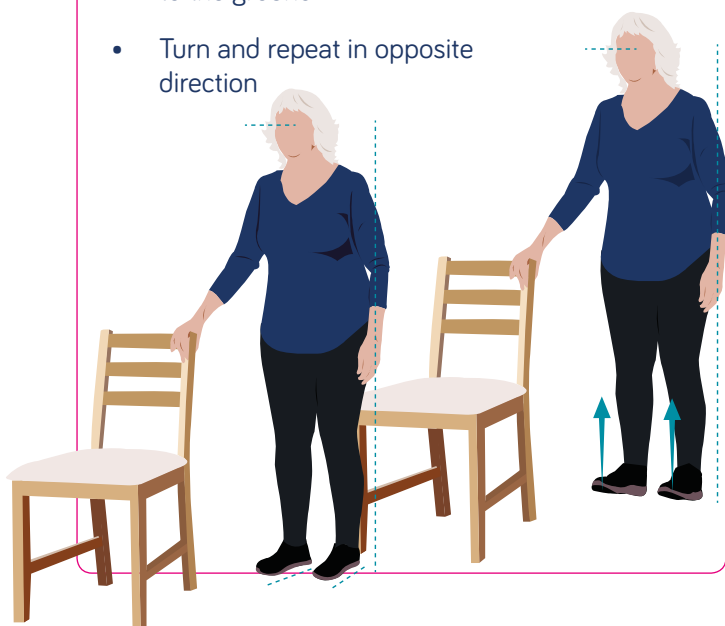
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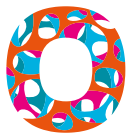
Toe raises and heel walking

- Stand near to a stable surface with one hand on the support if required
- Stand with an upright posture, looking straight ahead
- Raise your toes, keeping upright, your bottom in, with your knees soft, and avoid leaning forward
- Hold for up to three seconds
- Lower your toes back to floor
- Repeat ten times

Progression

- To progress this exercise to heel walking, with your toes up, bottom in, back straight and knees soft, take ten small steps forward, looking ahead, not down, then lower your toes to the ground
- Turn and repeat in opposite direction





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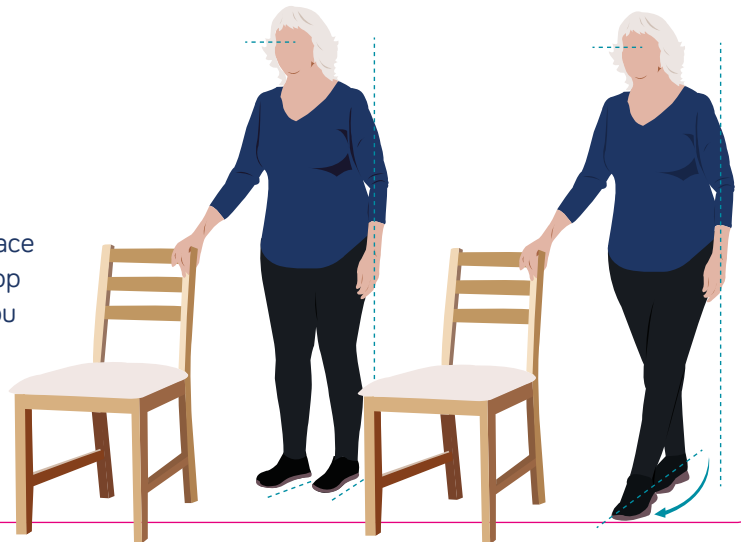
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Heel toe stand and heel toe walk

- Stand near to a stable surface with one hand on the support if required
- Stand with an upright posture, looking straight ahead
- Place one foot directly in front of the other, keeping your feet in a straight line and ensuring your weight is evenly distributed over both feet
- Hold for ten seconds then return to start
- Swap feet around and repeat

Progression

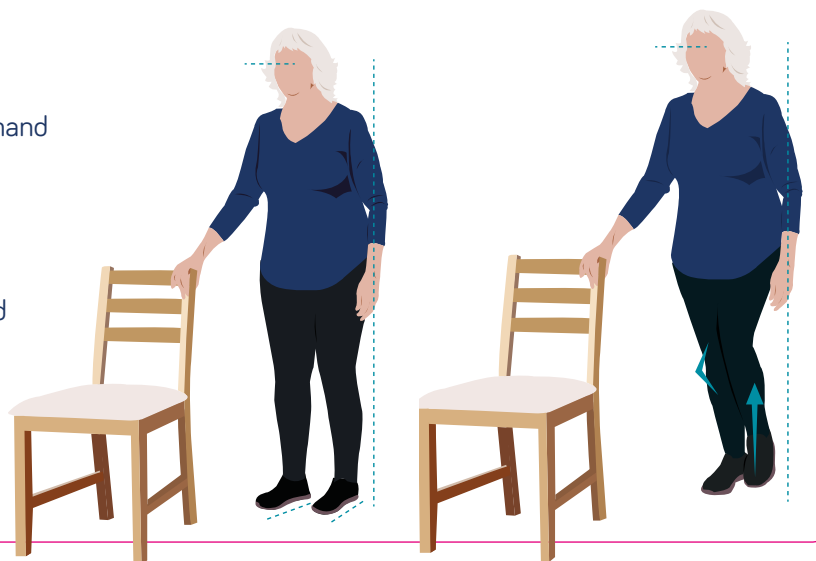
- To progress this exercise to heel toe walking, place one foot directly in front of the other and develop movement into walking in a straight line as if you are on a tightrope
- Take ten steps forward, turn and repeat in opposite direction



5

Single leg stand

- Stand near to a stable surface with one hand on the support if required
- Stand with an upright posture, looking straight ahead
- Lift one foot a small way off the floor and try to hold it there, balancing on one leg, keeping your support knee soft
- Aim to hold for ten seconds
- Repeat with your other leg



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6

Three way lunge

- Stand near to a stable surface with one hand on the support if required
- Stand with an upright posture, looking straight ahead
- Step the outside foot forwards, bending both knees but not letting the front knee come further forward than the toe, then step back to the start position
- Step out to your side with the same leg, bending that knee, then step back to the start position
- Step backward with the same leg, bending both knees, then step back to the start position
- Repeat four times
- Switch leg and repeat the exercise
- As you progress, increase the size of your step or lunge



To make these exercises more challenging and effective once your balance has improved, you can build up to not holding on, doing them on an uneven surface like a gravel path, or multi tasking and doing them while you're concentrating on something else.

See the accompanying video to these exercises at theros.org.uk/exercise/Balance

Tip: Try and fit these exercises into your daily life so you do them more often. Why not stand on one leg while cleaning your teeth, raise your heels or toes while you're waiting for the kettle to boil or practice the 'sit to stand' as you watch TV! And if you want more exercises to work on your muscle strength, take a look at our *Exercises for bone and muscle strength* fact sheet (3) theros.org.uk/exercise/Strength