



Patient & Family Guide
2026

Balance Exercises

Seniors LINCS Program



www.nshealth.ca

Balance Exercises

- To help improve your balance, you need to challenge it. This means doing balance exercises that are hard at first, but that you can get better at over time.
 - › If an exercise is too easy, your balance will not get better.
 - › If an exercise is too hard, you will not be able to do it without falling.
 - › The best exercise is somewhere in the middle.
- At first, you may be wobbly or need to correct your stance (the way you stand) to stay in a position. It is OK to put your foot down or hold on to something until you get your balance back. Over time, you will be able to do the exercises without falling.

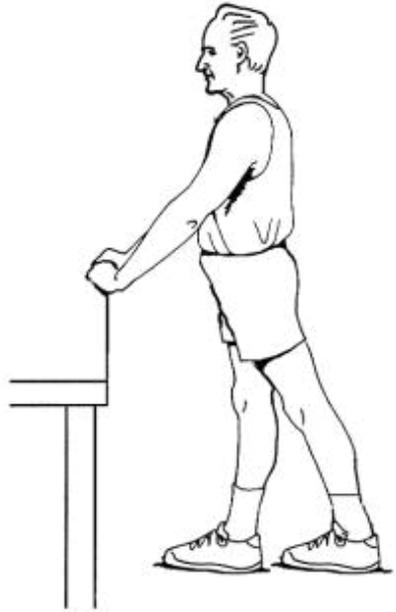
1. Feet together

- Stand in your normal stance.
- Move your feet as close together as you can.
- Hold this position for as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.



2. Tandem stance

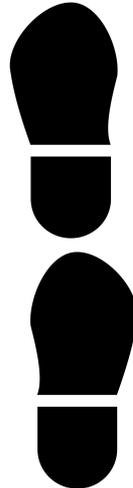
- Stand with your right foot directly behind your left foot.
- Hold this position for as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.
- Switch feet, so your left foot is directly behind your right foot.
- Hold this position for as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.
- **Note:** If you are not able to put 1 foot directly in front of the other, start the exercise with your foot slightly ahead, see “Adjusted tandem” below.



Adjusted tandem



Full tandem



3. Single leg stance

- Stand in your normal stance.
- Lift your right leg, so only your left foot is touching the floor.
- Hold this position for as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.
- Place your right foot on the floor. Then lift your left leg, so only your right foot is touching the floor.
- Hold this position for as long as you can, up to 30 seconds.



Progression

- **To make the exercises harder:**
 - › While holding each position, turn your head from left to right and back, or up and down.
 - › Then try to hold the position with your eyes closed.
- **Once you find this easy, you can make the exercises even harder:**
 - › Hold each position for 60 seconds or longer.
 - › Repeat each exercise.
 - › Do these exercises more often throughout the day.
- **Once you find this easy, you may want to add a surface that is not stable under your feet, like a pillow or a couch cushion.**
 - › Adding a surface that is not stable will make it harder to balance.
 - › The thicker the surface, the harder it will be to keep your balance. This is because your feet will be higher off the ground and you will have to work harder to keep your balance.
- If these progressions are too easy, ask your health care provider about other exercises you can try.

Safety reminders:

- Stand next to a counter or a sturdy chair when exercising. Hold onto the counter or chair while you get in position. Then let go when you are ready to start the exercise.
 - › Keep your hand just above the counter or chair, so you can grab it if you start to lose your balance.
- **If an exercise is very hard:**
 - › Stand with your back facing the corner of a wall or counter. If you start to lose your balance, lean backward into the corner.
 - › Keep a chair behind you. If you start to lose your balance, you can sit down.
- The exercises will feel different depending on whether you are wearing shoes. Try both ways to see which feels right for you.
 - › If you have more balance issues when you are wearing shoes, it may help to wear them while exercising.
 - › If you have more issues when you are not wearing shoes, it may help to exercise without them.
- Try not to hold your breath. People tend to hold their breath when doing hard exercises and when concentrating. Try to breathe as normally as possible.

If something does not feel right or causes pain, stop the exercises. Talk to your health care provider about how to change the exercise to make it right for you.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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