

Improving your Balance By Orthopedic & Spine Therapy of Green Bay

Improving your balance is one of the many ways that you can help yourself in order to prevent falling. You may feel that you've always had bad balance, but like anything, your balance can actually get better if you practice it.

How can you practice to improve your balance? Well, here is a little background information to give you a better understanding of how your balance works.

We all rely on three systems for balance:

1. Vision: This sense is vital to our sense of balance. Think about how much more difficult it is to walk around in a dark room compared to a lighted one.
2. Vestibular: This system is located in our inner ear and can be affected by factors such as an infection, medications, or alcohol use.
3. Somato-sensory: This system is our sense of touch. When we walk on an uneven surface, slippery or icy, it is more difficult to maintain balance compared to level, non slippery or icy surface.

Challenging any one of these systems will help you to improve your balance. Your physical therapist has a wide assortment of exercises to help you challenge these systems, but here are a few simple ideas to help you get started.

Before beginning these exercises, be sure you are in a safe environment. Make sure there will be nothing on the floor to cause you to trip, and try to have a counter or something sturdy nearby in case you need to hang on with your hands.

In order to challenge your sense of touch, try standing with one foot right in front of the other (heel to toe), keeping equal weight on both feet. This is called "tandem stance" and will narrow your base of support, making it more difficult to balance. If you feel confident, try not to use your hands, or if you're feeling really confident, try closing your eyes to eliminate your vision. Again, make sure you are in a safe environment before trying this.

If this exercise is too difficult, you may start with standing with your feet close together so they are touching. This will also narrow your base of support, but not as narrow as tandem stance. If tandem stance is too easy, you may progress yourself by either standing in tandem stance on a pillow or just standing on one foot on level ground.

There are several ideas that your primary care physician or your physical therapist can give to you to help you improve your balance. Each individual is different therefore each case will be different. Stop by your primary care physician or your physical therapist today to see what plan

of care fits your needs. The sooner you do the better your balance will be. We like to “keep your body in motion” by improving your balance in a safe and healthy way.

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