

Exercise for balance and fall prevention



Falls can be a serious health risk, especially for older adults. Keeping your body strong and making your surroundings safe are the best ways to reduce the risk of falling. Here at Kaiser Permanente, your physician, physical therapists, and other health care professionals want to help you stay healthy, active, and independent. We developed this exercise booklet to help you improve your balance, endurance, strength, and flexibility.

Aerobic exercise

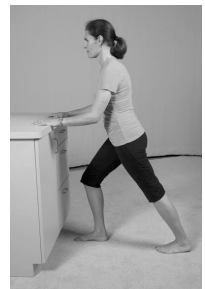
These are activities that increase your heart rate and breathing for a sustained period of time. You can try walking, swimming, water exercise, riding a bike, dancing, or Tai Chi. If this activity is new to you, start with 5 minutes 5-6 times per week and build up to at least 30 minutes 5 days a week.

Exercises to help keep you flexible

Flexibility exercises including stretching can give you more freedom of movement for your daily activities such as getting dressed, reaching objects on a shelf, and driving. Repeat each exercise 2-3 times per day.

Calf Stretch

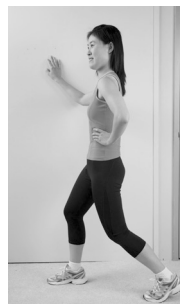
Stand facing a wall or counter, gently holding on for balance and support. Place the leg you want to stretch behind you. Keep your heel on the ground, your knee straight and your toes pointed straight ahead. Lean forward until you feel a gentle stretch in your calf. Hold the stretch for 30-60 seconds. Repeat on both sides.



Frequency _____

Hip Flexor Stretch

Stand next to a wall or counter, gently holding on for balance and support. Place your right foot in front of the left (like you are taking a step). Your left knee should be almost straight. Squeeze your buttock muscles and shift your weight to your front leg until you feel a stretch in the front of your left hip. Hold the stretch for 30-60 seconds. Repeat on both sides.



Frequency _____.

Alternate Hip Flexor Stretch

Place your foot on the seat of a chair behind you. Hold on to a wall or counter for balance. Gently tighten your buttocks and feel the stretch down the front of your hip and thigh. Hold the stretch for 30-60 seconds. Repeat on both sides.

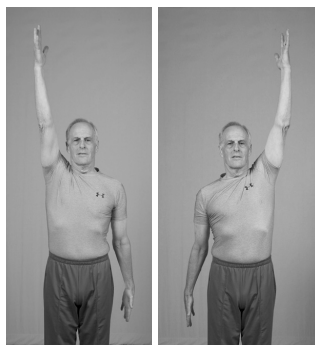


Frequency _____

Upper Back Stretch

Sitting or standing, reach up with your right arm and reach back with your left arm. Squeeze your shoulder blades together. Hold for 5 seconds.

Frequency _____



Exercises to improve your strength

Building up muscle strength improves your ability to perform everyday activities like carrying groceries, lifting a grandchild, or getting up out of a chair. Repeat all exercises 2-3 times per day.

Bridging

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Gently tighten your stomach and buttock muscles. Lift your hips 3-5 inches from the floor without arching your back. Hold for 5-10 seconds, and then slowly lower your hips to the floor.



Frequency _____

Mini Squat using a Chair

Gently hold onto the back of the chair or counter with your feet shoulder width apart. Slowly bend your knees and squat down just a few inches. Keep your knees directly over your feet. Hold for 5-10 seconds; then return to the starting position.



Start

End

Frequency _____

□ 3-Way Hip in Standing

Standing, hold on to a counter or a chair. Keep your pelvis level and try to avoid arching your back.

- a) Move your right leg forward and back to the starting position.
Repeat on the other side.

Frequency _____



Start

End

- b) Move your right leg out to side and back to the starting position.
Repeat on the other side.

Frequency _____

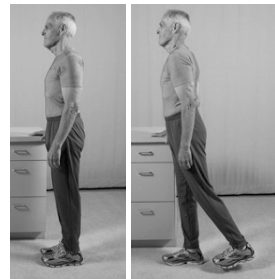


Start

End

- c) Move your left leg backwards and then return to starting position.
Repeat on the other side.

Frequency _____



Start

End

Marching for Hip Strength

Stand and hold on to a counter or high back chair that is at your side.

Stand on your left foot and lift your right knee up, then return it to the starting position.

Stand on your right foot and lift your left knee up. Return to the starting position.

Alternate legs as if you are marching.

Frequency _____



Start

End

Heel Raises and Toe Raises

Hold on to the back of a chair or counter for balance and support.

- a) Rise up on your toes and return back down.

Frequency _____



- b) Shift your weight to your heels and lift your toes up off of the floor.

Frequency _____



Exercises to improve balance

Balance exercises can help prevent falls by improving your ability to control and maintain your body's position. To keep safe, please read and follow exercise descriptions carefully. It's a good idea to stand in the corner of a room when you do these exercises. Use the walls on either side of you to help you regain your balance if you feel like you might be falling. We also recommend that you place the back of a chair in front of you for support. If you are a little unsteady while doing these exercises, that's okay. That means you are working those muscles! The following exercises are listed in the order of least to greatest level of difficulty. Repeat the balance exercises 2-3 times per day.

❑ Standing Balance

Stand on a firm surface backed into a corner of a room or stand facing a counter top. Touch the walls or counter only to regain your balance and to prevent a fall.

- a) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Try to count to 30 without losing your balance.

- b) Stand with your feet close together. Try to count to 30 without losing your balance.



- c) Stand with one foot in front of the other. Try to count to 30 without losing your balance.



You can progress exercises a, b, and c by:

- Closing your eyes and following instructions above
- or**
- Turning your head slowly from side to side throughout the exercise

Body Circle Sway

Stand backed into a corner with your fingertips able to gently touch the walls. Touch the walls only if you need to regain your balance and prevent a fall. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart. Move only from your ankles. Start by shifting your weight side to side 5 times, then shifting it forward and back 5 times. Combine the movements and shift your weight in a circle clockwise and counter-clockwise.



Frequency _____

Side Stepping

Stand with a long counter in front of you, only touching the counter if you need to regain your balance. Step sideways with one leg and bring your other foot to it. Repeat for 5 steps in the same direction.



Repeat 5 steps in the opposite direction.

Frequency _____

Tandem Walking

Stand at the end of a hallway or long counter. Only touch the walls or the counter if you need to regain your balance. Focus on a target directly in front of you.



Walk forward by placing one foot directly in front of the other as if you are walking a tightrope.

Walk as straight as you can, not veering to either side.

Frequency _____

Single Leg Standing Balance

Stand on a firm surface backed into a corner of a room or stand next to a counter top.

Touch the walls or counter only if you need to regain your balance. Stand on one leg.

Try and remain steady for 10-15 seconds.

Repeat with your other leg. Continue alternating sides.

Frequency _____



Forward Reach using Hip Strategy

Stand on a firm surface close to, but not touching a counter. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder width apart. Touch the counter only to regain your balance and to prevent a fall.

- a) Reach forward with your hands and move your hips backwards to counterbalance you. Keep your back straight as you move. Come back to the starting position.

Frequency _____



- b) Reach across to the left with your hands and move your hips backwards to the right. Return to the starting position. Then repeat the exercise reaching right with your hands and moving your hips backwards to the left.

Frequency _____

Other resources

Visit kp.org/mydoctor to find resources such as the *Checklist for Preventing Falls at Home*. Under the “Tools and Classes” tab find information about classes and other programs to help you improve your balance and strength. Once there, you can also watch a short video called “Preventing Falls.”

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

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