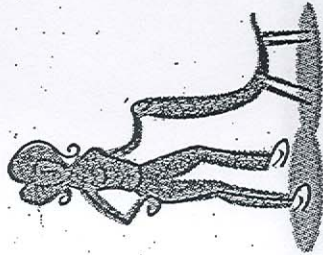


# 6 exercises to improve balance

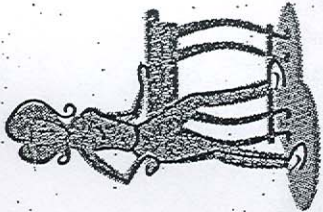
**Stronger muscles, increased endurance and more confidence will improve balance.**

These exercises are recommended by doctors, physical therapists and personal trainers. Don't do these alone unless you're really confident; otherwise, get a friend to help you.

Many senior centers have exercise programs that could also help your balance. Tai chi, dancing, using stability balls and climbing steps are also helpful.



**One-leg stand:** Stand where you can hold onto something, such as the kitchen countertop or a very sturdy chair. Stand on one leg for about 30 seconds, then switch legs. Try to do this twice on each leg.



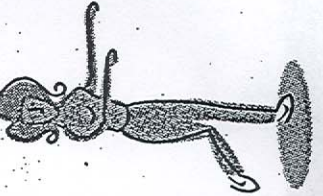
**Forward leg lift:** With one hand, hold onto a table or a countertop. Lift one leg in front of you for five seconds; repeat five times. Then do the exercise with the other leg. As you get stronger, try to do the leg lift without holding on. Once you master that, try it with your eyes closed.



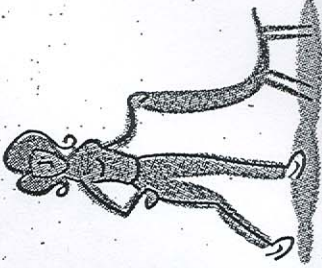
**Forward toe touch:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart; raise your hands to your shoulders with your palms facing forward. Extend your right arm forward with your toes touching the floor, then return to starting position. Do this five times on each side.



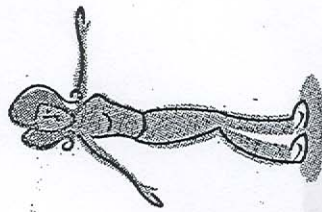
**One-leg heel lift:** Place your feet about shoulder-width apart. Extend your arms straight in front of you. Lift your left leg and bend it back at the knee; hold for five seconds. Do the other side. Repeat five times on each side. As you get stronger, practice this throughout the day.



**Side lift:** Stand behind a table or chair; feet slightly apart. Hold onto the table or chair for balance. Slowly lift one leg to the side, 6 to 12 inches out. Keep your back straight. Don't point your toes downward — keep them facing forward. Hold the position briefly, then slowly lower the leg. Alternate legs until you do the exercise eight to 15 times on each leg. Rest, then do another set of eight to 15 repetitions.



**Tightrope walk:** Walk heel-to-toe. Position your heel just in front of the toes of the opposite foot each time you take a step. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch. After taking 10 to 20 steps forward, walk backward toe-to-heel along the same imaginary line.



SOURCES: BRENDA GUILLORY, PERSONAL TRAINER; MARGARET HERNING, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY AT ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY; CATHERINE SEINER, PHYSICAL THERAPIST WITH ST. LOUIS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL; AARP WEB SITE; SENIORNET; NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH WEB SITE