

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. 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, biking, dancing, or tai chi. If this activity is new to you, start with 5 minutes 5 to 6 times per week and build up to at least 30 minutes 5 days a week.

Exercises to improve flexibility

Flexibility exercises like 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 to 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 to 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're 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 to 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 to 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 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 to 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 to 5 inches from the floor without arching your back. Hold for 5 to 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 to 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.



Start

End

Frequency _____

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



Start

End

Frequency _____

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



Start

End

Frequency _____

❑ 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're 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 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, be sure to 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 start to fall. We also recommend placing the back of a chair in front of you for support. If you're a little unsteady doing these exercises, that's okay. It means you're working those muscles!

These exercises are listed from least to greatest level of difficulty. Repeat the balance exercises 2 to 3 times per day.

Standing balance

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

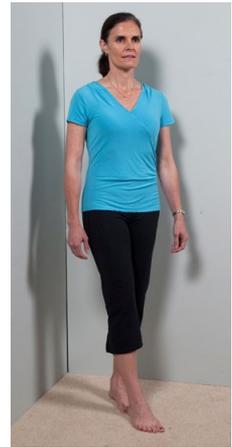
- a) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Try to count to 30 without losing your balance.
- b) Stand with your feet close together. Try to count to 30 without losing your balance.



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

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

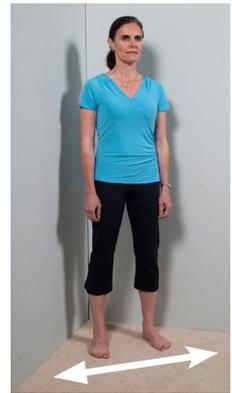
- Closing your eyes and following the instructions above.
- Turning your head slowly from side to side throughout the exercise.



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 counterclockwise.

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're 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 countertop.

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

Try and remain steady for 10 to 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 [kpdoc.org/preventfalls](https://www.kpdoc.org/preventfalls) to find resources such as the Checklist: Prevent Falls at Home, and to learn more about how to prevent falls and fractures.

This information is not intended to diagnose 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. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.

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