

Patty's PT Tips

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Stability Ball Exercises- Part 1

Stability Ball Exercises stimulate 3 sensory systems-proprioception, vestibular and vision which all contribute to balance in any position. The ball challenges all these systems.

Strength and endurance also are improved by this form of exercise. Greater layers of challenge can be added by using bands or free weights.

Balls are available on Amazon or most athletic stores with prices ranging from \$20-\$30

Larger diameter balls are more stable and should be firmly inflated. Ideally when you sit on a ball your hips and knees should be positioned at a 90 degree angle.

Safety precautions include placing your ball in the corner of a room, placing it between two chairs or solid pieces of furniture or having an able helper "spot" you to help correct momentary lapses of balance.

Bouncing on a ball-stimulates proprioception-that sense of where your body is in space.

Vestibular Training- hold a pen/marker in your hand at arm's length and work on gaze fixation when bouncing on the ball. Or you can post a shape or letter on a wall 2 or 3 feet away from you. You can increase the challenge by maintaining your gaze as you turn your head side-to-side or up and down or in diagonal motions. Pick a letter or symbol on the marker to help fixate your gaze. You may want to try this while seated in a firm chair before sitting on the ball. This is a very neurologically fatiguing process so you may want to limit your efforts in 20-30 second increments. It may stimulate symptoms of dizziness or "brain fog". Those are signs of neurological fatigue.

Balance and co-ordination drills- while sitting on the ball you can toss a smaller ball from one hand to the other or back and forth to a partner. This is a higher challenge for all aspects of exercise.

Pelvic girdle/core strengthening-while seated on the ball you want to aim for small, **smooth**, controlled movements of the pelvis while maintaining an erect posture. Only challenge yourself slightly outside your comfort zone for safety and for truly improving your motor control. As your strength, balance and endurance improve you can try bigger ranges of movement.

Do not exceed 20 minutes of this type of exercise-even if you are pretty good at it. It will have consequences for your functional activities later in the day.