

Patty's PT Tips

Pre-gait Exercises Standing Balance Skills Training

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Seated Balance:

Free sitting at edge of chair with weight shifting-forward/backward; side-to-side, diagonals, trunk rotation or “walk” the hips forward and backward one hip at a time.

May utilize a narrow base of support by keeping thighs close together or a more stable base with thighs apart.

May start with more stability by being forward in the chair seat but with a pillow behind the back or by using a chair with armrests.

The larger the weight shift the more trunk muscular strength is required for success

The faster you switch directions the more neurological demand you create and the more likely you will use compensatory movements that may throw off your postural control. The movement will appear less coordinated and less functional in transfers and standing. You always want to train the nervous system to get the best information to be used in more challenging situations. Challenges usually come as a big surprise! (oops-fall!)

Balance requires strength, coordination and motor control.

Standing Balance:

Prepare your environment for safety first if you are planning to challenge your standing balance.

Examples: Create a triangle of safety-in the corner of a room, with your back facing the wall and a chair on each side of you or in front of you OR standing parallel to a wall or piece of heavy furniture to touch as needed.

Standing surface can add an element of increasing demand. Each modification requires different strength and balance skills

Examples: a. flat floor b. carpeted floor c. couch cushion under feet c. uneven gravel surface d. sloped surface e. stair environment

Foot Placement changes the balance required in each environment

Examples: a. feet hip width apart (most commonly used in normal function) b. feet close together (narrow stance) c. stagger stance-one foot in front of the other d. lunge position e. feet positioned at different angles as if stepping on different numbers on a clock face laying on the ground

Visual Input: Eyes open vs. eyes closed, low light/bright light, head position (rotated)

Advanced Techniques:

Single Limb Balance: This is a progression of all of the above and is a much higher functioning skill. You can change the standing surface you are on, add distractions (music in the background), assist yourself with walker or trekking poles (one or two poles), change the lighting or head position. When changing any of these elements it is important to go back to safety first and don't overestimate your control when you increase the neurological demand. **Practice** makes perfect! It's better to progress slowly and be successful and safe than to get overzealous and create an injury. Many, many, many repetitions will teach a new skill.

Patience is a virtue!

Don't fill your "threat bucket" too quickly and risk overfatigue or poor quality of movement.

Celebrate your successes!