

# Ankle Weight Exercises For Strength & Balance

Each year, Australian hospitals have thousands of admissions for broken hips, and falling is often the cause of those fractures. Balance exercises can help you stay independent by helping you avoid the disability — often permanent — that may result from falling.

As you will see, there is a lot of overlap between strength and balance exercises; very often, one exercise serves both purposes.

## About Strength/Balance Exercises

Any of the lower-body exercises for strength shown in the previous strength section also are balance exercises. They include plantar flexion, hip flexion, hip extension, knee flexion, and side leg raise. Just do your regularly scheduled strength exercises, and they will improve your balance at the same time. Also do the knee-extension exercise, which helps you keep your balance by increasing muscle strength in your upper thighs.

## Safety

- Don't do more than your regularly scheduled strength-exercise sessions to incorporate these balance modifications.
- Remember that doing strength exercises too often can do more harm than good.
- Do your strength exercises, & incorporate these balance techniques as you progress.

## Progressing

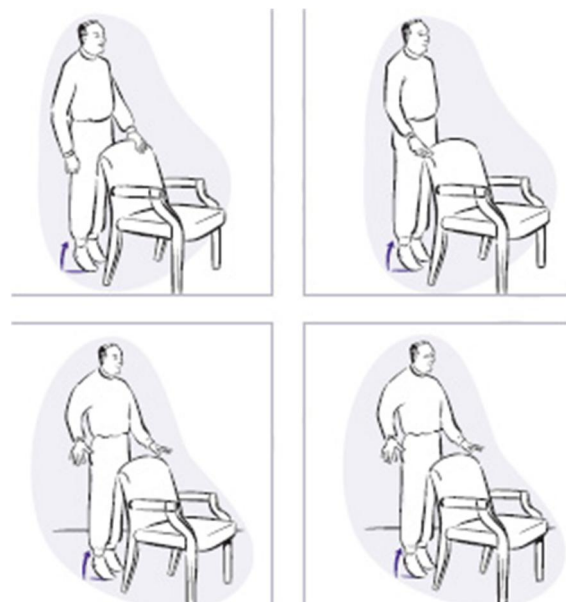
These exercises can improve your balance even more if you add the following modifications: Note that these exercises instruct you to hold onto a table or chair for balance. Hold onto the table with only one hand. As you progress, try holding on with only one fingertip. Next, try these exercises without holding on at all. If you are very steady on your feet, move on to doing the exercises using no hands, with your eyes closed. Have someone stand close by if you are unsteady.

## Plantar Flexion

Plantar flexion is already included in your strength exercises. When doing your strength exercises, add these modifications to plantar flexion as you progress: Hold table with one hand, then one fingertip, then no hands; then do exercise with eyes closed, if steady.

Summary:

1. Stand straight; hold onto a table or chair for balance.
2. Slowly stand on tip toe, as high as possible.
3. Hold position for 1 second.



4. Slowly lower heels all the way back down. Pause.
5. Repeat 8 to 15 times.
6. Rest; then do another set of 8 to 15 repetitions.
7. Add modifications as you progress.

### Knee Flexion

Do knee flexion as part of your regularly scheduled strength exercises, and add these modifications as you progress: Hold table with one hand, then one fingertip, then no hands; then do exercise with eyes closed, if steady.

1. Stand straight; hold onto a table or chair for balance.
2. Slowly bend knee as far as possible, so foot lifts up behind you.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Slowly lower foot all the way back down. Pause.
5. Repeat with other leg.
6. Alternate legs until you have done 8 to 15 repetitions with each leg.
7. Rest; then do another set of 8 to 15 alternating repetitions.
8. Add modifications as you progress.



### Hip Flexion

Do hip flexion as part of your regularly scheduled strength exercises, and add these modifications as you progress: Hold table with one hand, then one fingertip, then no hands; then do exercise with eyes closed, if steady.

1. Stand straight; hold onto a table or chair for balance.
2. Slowly bend one knee toward chest, without bending waist or hips.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Slowly lower leg all the way down. Pause.
5. Repeat with other leg.
6. Alternate legs until you have done 8 to 15 repetitions with each leg.
7. Rest; then do another set of 8 to 15 alternating repetitions.
8. Add modifications as you progress.



### Hip Extension

Do hip extension as part of your regularly scheduled strength exercises, and add these modifications as you progress: Hold table with one hand, then one fingertip, then no hands; then do exercise with eyes closed, if steady.

1. Stand 12 to 18 inches from a table or chair, feet slightly apart.
2. Bend forward at hips at about 45-degree angle; hold onto a table or chair for balance.
3. Slowly lift one leg straight backwards without bending your knee, pointing your toes, or bending your upper body any farther forward.
4. Hold position for 1 second.
5. Slowly lower leg. Pause.
6. Repeat with other leg.
7. Alternate legs until you have done 8 to 15 repetitions with each leg.
8. Rest; then do another set of 8 to 15 alternating repetitions.
9. Add modifications as you progress.



### Side Leg Raise

Do leg raise as part of your regularly scheduled strength exercises, and add these modifications as you progress: Hold table with one hand, then one fingertip, then no hands; then do exercise with eyes closed, if steady.

1. Stand straight, directly behind table or chair, feet slightly apart.
2. Hold onto table or chair for balance.
3. Slowly lift one leg to side 6-12 inches out to side. Keep your back and both legs straight. Don't point your toes outward; keep them facing forward.
4. Hold position for 1 second.
5. Slowly lower leg all the way down. Pause.
6. Repeat with other leg.
7. Alternate legs until you have done 8 to 15 repetitions with each leg.
8. Rest; then do another set of 8 to 15 alternating repetitions.
9. Add modifications as you progress.



**Anytime/Anywhere**

These types of exercises also improve your balance. You can do them almost anytime, anywhere, and as often as you like, as long as you have something sturdy nearby to hold onto if you become unsteady.

Examples:

- 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. (See Illustration.)
- Stand on one foot (for example, while waiting in line at the grocery store or at the bus stop). Alternate feet.
- Stand up and sit down without using your hands.

