

BALANCE FOR LIFE

As we grow older, our bodies undergo many natural changes. Most people will experience some degree of reduced balance and strength, vision and hearing changes, and medical problems, all of which can put you at risk of falling and getting injured.

Did you know:

- **Balance starts to decline earlier than you might think! For women, this starts in their 40s and for men it usually happens in their 60s.**
- **Over 1/3 of Manitobans over the age of 65 fall each year and about 20% of these people will have a serious injury.**
- **After you have a fall, you are 3 times more likely to fall again.**

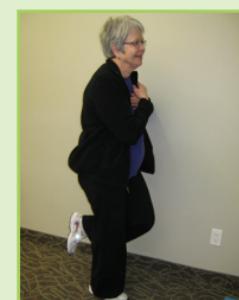
The good news is that 42% of falls can be prevented by doing specific exercises!

At every stage of life, people can improve their balance and strength to reduce their risk of falls. A physiotherapist can help you get started. He or she can assess your balance and strength needs, and provide an individual or group exercise program to keep you healthy and active.

Visit www.mbfphysio.org to learn more.

When it comes to preventing falls, not all exercise programs are created equal. Here are a few questions to ask when choosing an exercise program to help improve your balance and strength.

Is at least 40% of the exercise program spent on balance training? Examples of balance exercises are 1) decreasing how much you use your hands for support; 2) standing with your feet close together or on one leg; 3) Tai Chi.



Does the program also include strength training? Examples of strength exercises are 1) standing from sitting in a chair; 2) raising up onto your toes and back down; 3) stepping up and down on a stair.

What are the qualifications of the instructor? Look for an instructor who is a physiotherapist, trained fitness leader or has other health and exercise training.



What safety precautions are taken in the class? The instructor should have you near a wall or chair for support if possible. Look for instructors with First Aid and CPR training.

Can I exercise at home and in class? Add up your daily segments of exercise both at home and in class. They should amount to at least 2 – 3 hours per week every week. Be sure to stand near a wall or chair for support to be safe.



Courtesy of Reh-Fit Centre

Walking is good to keep you healthy, but it is not as helpful in preventing falls. It is good to do a range of different exercise for overall health, including walking, balance and strength training.