

Falls Prevention Service

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Changing Habits

Instead of avoiding activities or simplifying things to make life easier, look for ways to make your muscle work harder. This will gradually strengthen your muscles.

Think about how you can incorporate strengthening activities into your daily activities, household activities and leisure activities.

For example; bending your knees (knee bend) instead of bending your back when picking up the TV remote from the coffee table, getting things out of low cupboards in the kitchen, opening a drawer or cupboard which is below waist height.

If you have any concerns relating to the information in this leaflet, or you would like further advice please speak to your therapist.

**Bromley
Healthcare**
community first

The Falls Prevention service is provided by Bromley Healthcare, an award-winning social enterprise working with the NHS, delivering a wide range of community healthcare services to people of all ages in Bromley, Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham.

We provide a wide range of nursing, medical and therapy services for adults and children. These include District Nursing, Health Visiting, Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. 98% of our patients would recommend our services to their friends and family.

Tell us what you think

We want you to be happy with the service you receive from us, but we know that every so often something might go wrong. If you're unhappy with the care you receive or an element of our service, we want to hear from you.

Of course, we also want to hear from you if you're happy with the care you're receiving - it's good to be able to thank the team and let people know they're doing a good job, so if you have a compliment or congratulation, we'd like to hear from you.

If we are unable to resolve your concerns or you would like to take the matter further please contact us at the address below.

Central Court
1b Knoll Rise
Orpington BR6 0JA

020 8315 8880

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bromleyhealthcare.org.uk

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NHS



Balance and reducing fall risks

Falls Prevention Service

Balance

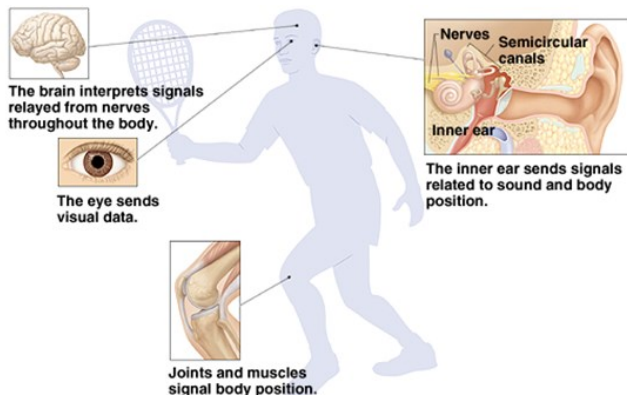
Balance is staying up-right and steady when standing or sitting or during movement. We rely on our balance to stay up-right when we over-reach for something or trip up.

As we age, our balance reaction times slow down and so do our reflexes. This makes it harder to regain balance, especially when we do something quickly.

The ears, eyes, joint position, brain and balance

The balance system relies on three different senses:

- Eyes; see where you're going and where you are
- Joint position sense; helps you to feel where you are and how you are moving
- Ear; the balance organ in your inner ear (the vestibular organ or labyrinth) senses whenever your head moves.



The brain; acts like a computer, combining and co-ordinating signals from these three senses to give a stable picture of the world and control your head, body and eye movements. If any part of the balance system is not working as it should, then dizziness, unsteadiness, disorientation or loss of balance may occur.

TIP: If you have problems with balance when walking, try focusing on stationary objects.

Summary

You maintain your balance because information from your muscles, joints, eyes and ears is organised by your brain and used to help you move and maintain your balance.

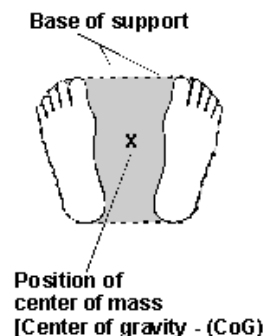
Base of support (the width your feet are apart)

Other factors which affect your balance include the size of the base of support.

The wider the base of support, the easier it is to maintain balance.

You can increase your base of support by using a suitable walking aid.

Discuss the use of a suitable walking aid for you, with your physiotherapist.



Why is all this stuff about balance good for me?

Having good balance means your muscles work well together and you are less likely to stress your joints (which can cause pain). It makes sitting, standing, walking and other activities easier.

What can I do to improve and maintain my balance?

Strength, flexibility, balance and reaction time are the most readily changeable risk factors for falls. People in their 90s have been shown to improve their strength and balance to achieve better stability and reduce falls risk. You are never too old.

Muscles from all over the body can be involved in automatic postural adjustments to maintain balance. This is why it is important to keep all our muscles as strong as possible.

It's easy to improve your strength and balance with simple, regular, specific exercises. Exercise is a simple and effective way to reduce your risk of falling.

PLUS: improving muscle strength will help with all functional activities such as helping you get up out of a chair, improving posture, co-ordination and balance and you will maintain your independence for longer.

Exercises can help overcome joint stiffness that can cause joint pain.