

Exercise Two

This exercise still requires you to stand on one foot, but increase the difficulty by standing on an uneven surface like a pillow. In addition, you can place an exercise band (tied to the leg of a solid structure) around the ankle of the un-supporting leg. Stand on the other leg, and with the exercise band under tension, maintain your balance. For advanced participants the level of difficulty can be increased further by combining the band, pillow and eyes shut technique together, as one exercise.



Exercise Three

This exercise requires you to stand on one leg whilst bouncing a ball off a wall, after which, you can progress to juggling a ball, heading a ball or swinging a racquet, for example. These exercises help to combine the skills of balance and co-ordination from different muscle groups whilst completing complex tasks.



Exercise Four

This is an advanced exercise. Individuals who are unsteady with the previous exercises need to seek advice from your Podiatrist before progressing. Place a wobble board near to a supporting wall (for assistance when stepping on the board). Place the strongest foot on the centre of the board. Steady yourself on the board before standing on your other foot. The ability to stand on this board is an exercise in itself. Once you have mastered this position, you can increase the difficulty by holding your hands out, eyes shut and so forth.

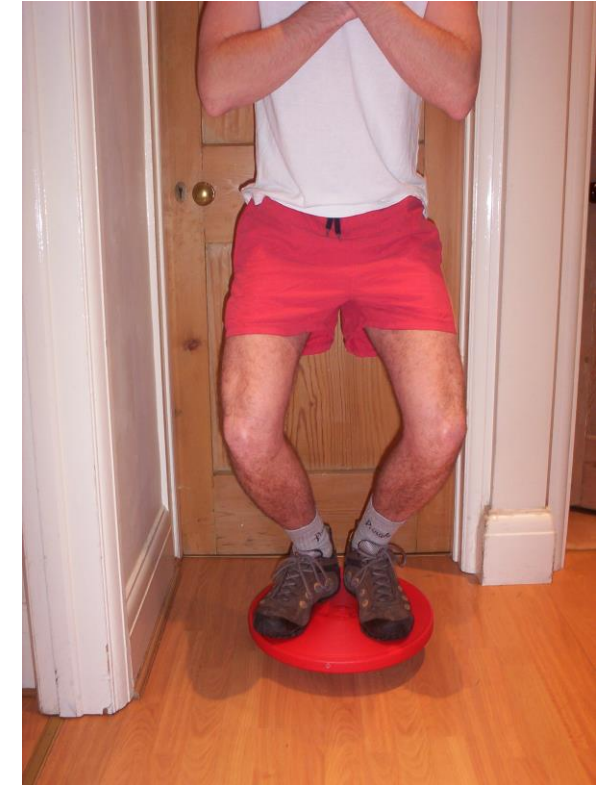


Exercise Five

To combine balance skills with strength you can stand on the wobble board and bend your knees. Once mastered, you can add a small weight, like a dumbbell, or try standing on one foot and bend the knee; or attach a rubber band between the non-supporting leg and solid structure. Increase the difficulty by performing tasks similar to your activity, like carrying a shopping bag, bouncing a ball, or even heading a ball!



Balance and Co-ordination Exercises



What are balance and coordination exercises?

These exercises are a series of special activities to improve the steadiness of your walk and stability of your legs, ankles and feet.

Increasing your ability to maintain your balance and improving your coordination will help reduce unnecessary stress on the lower limb and prevent injury to your ligaments and muscles.

Are these exercises suitable for me?

These exercises are suitable for all age groups whether you are an athlete or a walker. They are suitable if you have an overuse injury, a sprain, or suffer from falls. They are particularly useful if you are unsteady on your feet. They should be performed if you have been fitted with orthoses or special footwear.

How do they work?

Injury, like a sprain, can lead to nerve damage, due to the nerve being pulled (traction). Furthermore, damage to a muscle or joint which causes bleeding can also affect a neighbouring nerve. Once the nerves to muscles, joints and ligaments are damaged, your balance and postural control can be adversely affected. Specialised training is required to regain your balance and postural stability.

Better awareness of movement (proprioception) and improved coordination will increase your confidence and assist your walking. These exercises must be performed as part of an overall fitness programme. Please contact your podiatrist about strength training and stretching exercises for the legs, ankles and feet.

Contra-indications

Do not perform these exercises if you have a neurological or neuromuscular disorder or have had a joint replacement or have received an injury within the last seven days. Please consult your podiatrist for further advice.

Warm up!

You must warm up, for 10–15 minutes, before exercising. Use passive heat in the form of a shower or sauna if you are recovering from an injury; or an active warm up like a gentle jog on the spot or light aerobics. Similarly, use clockwise and counter clockwise movements of the foot.

How often?

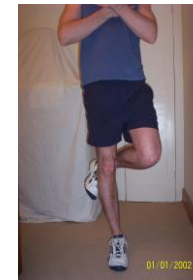
Each exercise should be held for 15 – 30 seconds and repeated 3 times, daily. The exercises are phased with the easiest presented first. You must follow this sequence and not jump ahead as this may lead to injury. Please consult your Podiatrist if you are unsure which exercise is suitable.

Equipment

You will need a firm pair of trainers and be close to a supporting structure like a wall or solid chair. As you progress you will also need a pillow, a small ball, an exercise band and a wobble board.

Exercise One

Stand opposite a wall and support yourself with both hands. Lift one foot off the ground and place it behind the other calf. Steady yourself and remove one hand at a time off the wall. It is normal to sway, however, if you feel you are about to fall, place your hands back on the wall. Once your confidence has grown, keep your hands free and stay on one foot for a maximum of 30 seconds.



You can increase the difficulty of this exercise by holding your hands out. Once you have mastered this exercise you can progress to balancing on one leg with your eyes shut.

