



Exercising with dizziness and balance disorders

Every move counts

Move more and reduce your sedentary time each day by incorporating different types of movement. It is never too late to start, some is always better than none!

How to get started

Regular exercise is important for improving balance, coordination and strength, increasing activity levels and reducing the risk of falls, fractures and injury that can result from dizziness and balance disorders. It also significantly reduces your risk of heart disease, hypertension, some cancers, obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, depression and stress. Better balance function and the reduction of dizziness will improve your ability to carry out the activities of daily living.

Discuss with your doctor or healthcare provider if compensation or habituation training would help with your condition. These exercises involve moving your head and eyes and changing your position quickly, both of which can cause dizziness and loss of balance. The intended outcome is to train your body to 'allow' for these types of movement safely and effectively. Some disabilities and pain situations make it difficult to make head movements or change body positions with the speed and range of motion needed to reduce your symptoms, so ask your doctor for advice and support. A physiotherapist or certified health and fitness professional can give you further advice on these exercises.

Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.

Warm up and cool down

Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely. Warm-up exercises include dynamic stretches, range-of-motion activities and low intensity movements. This can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool-down to ensure your heart rate and breathing rate return to normal safely. Cool down exercises include slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity and simple stretches.

Be active

Some is good, more is better

How much:	Aim for at least 150 – 300 minutes a week of moderate intensity or at least 75–150 minutes a week of vigorous intensity physical activity. Start moving more each day increasing to regular movement every day and add sessions as your strength and stamina improve.
How hard:	Any movement helps. Aim for moderate to vigorous intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary.
How long:	Aim to spread out your session throughout the week. If your fitness level is low, start with 5–10-minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for longer.

What type:	All physical activity counts. Try activities within your abilities: walking, cycling, jogging, dancing, swimming, water aerobics, hiking—choose something you enjoy! Recreational team sports such as soccer, tennis, or volleyball are great social activities too! Recreational sport or leisure activities that challenge coordination and agility may improve your balance and reduce your falls risk. Household activities such as cleaning, gardening, vacuuming or walking your dog are great activities for your health. Start exercises in a chair if balance or stamina is a problem, then progress to walking or standing exercises when your confidence and fitness level increase.
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What will it do for me?

Regular exercises significantly improve your overall health and helps you move easily and maintain your balance.

Build strength

How much:	At least twice a week.
How hard:	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate or greater intensities over time.
How long:	Choose a variety of 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1–3 sets. Rest for 1–2 minutes between each set.
What type:	Choose a variety of strength exercises using free weights, resistance machines or household items such as a can of beans or a weighted water bottle as a weight. Consider exercises in a chair to help you balance, then progress to standing or using weights with movement. Use light weights on wrists and ankles to progress exercises.

What will it do for me?

Strength exercises improve your confidence and stamina, prevent falls and help with balance and coordination.

Improve balance

How much:	At least three days a week.
How hard:	Try 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10–15 times.
How long:	Hold each balance for 10–30 seconds. Use support and then gradually reduce it (e.g. use your hands then fingertips until you can progress to letting go altogether).
What type:	Try yoga, Tai Chi, walking or simple home balance exercises using a sturdy chair or wall for support, or join a class! Progress to standing exercises, walking on different terrains or using an exercise ball. Ask a healthcare provider to demonstrate suitable balance exercises and/or for support until you feel confident to exercise alone. Ensure the area you are exercising in and the type of balance exercise is safe.



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What will it do for me?

Practicing balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to a loss of balance and can help reduce the risk of falls, fractures and injuries.

Sedentary living

Reduce the amount of time being sedentary. Move more and break up sedentary time. Sedentary behavior is defined as time spent sitting or lying with low energy expenditure, while awake in the context of occupational, educational, home and community settings, and travel. Higher amounts of sedentary behavior can increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

Replace sedentary behavior with more physical activity of any intensity (including light intensity). It is possible to avoid sedentary behaviour and be physically active while sitting or lying, through, for example, upper body led activities, inclusive and/or wheelchair-specific sport and activities. Try seated stretches for those with limited mobility; using active forms of transport; standing while working (within your abilities and environment), and other accessible active options to replace sedentary time.

Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with, and that you enjoy. Always exercise within your abilities. If mobility is difficult, adapted cycling, swimming and chair-based exercises may be better alternatives. Exercise with friends and family or join a group class. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer. Most importantly: **some physical activity is better than none!**

Exercise safety

Exercise in a safe environment free from clutter or equipment. Never exercise holding onto an object that may move.

Start with a chair-based exercise plan to improve your coordination and overall strength if you are at high risk of falling. Daily standing balance work, however, is the key to improving your balance and reducing your falls risk.

Ask your doctor for more information about how to exercise safely and how to maintain an exercise plan. Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10–15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level.

Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary, and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Choose environments that you can access freely and safely. Please ask your healthcare provider or local leisure organizations for advice on the best option for you.

Resources

Learn more about dizziness and balance disorders at <https://balanceanddizziness.org/help-yourself/physical-activity/alance>

Scan for more physical activity resources!

