

# Why is Balance Training so Important?

**Balance** is the ability to control the body in space whilst performing **static** (maintaining one's center of gravity (CoG) within the base of support (BoS) or **dynamic** (moving the CoG outside the BoS) movements. Most people do not incorporate balance training into their exercise programs as they do not understand the importance of this training subtype.

Balance training should be considered the **corner stone of quality movement**. Efficient movement requires strong proprioception and a stable core, both of which are improved through balance training. Moreover, balance training improves over-all fitness and quality of life; sport performance; and decreases the risk of injury. Specific benefits include:



1. **Proprioception:** is the ability for the body to know where its limbs are in space. Balance training is an excellent way to help the body recognize where it is in space and to help control movements in space. With increased proprioception, the body is able to produce smooth, controlled movements with a lower risk of injury.
2. **Neuromuscular coordination:** Balance training requires every muscle in the body to work together, or coordinate. Through balance training, the brain is able to tell the appropriate muscles to fire at the correct times producing stable, quality movements.
3. **Joint Stability:** Balance training promotes stability through joints such as the ankles, knees, hips and shoulders. These multi-axial joints are protected through balance training. Common injuries that occur in unstable joints are: ankle sprains, ACL tears, and rotator cuff injuries.
4. **Reaction Time:** Through balance training, the body learns to quickly correct, but not over compensate, movements in response to a stimulus or the environment. Through repeated training, reaction time decreases and perfect correction increases.

5. **Strength:** The first step in increasing strength is greater muscle fibre recruitment. Balance training promotes a higher percentage of muscle fibre recruitment and thus is the perfect way to help the brain learn to recruit more fibres. Consider adding a few balance exercises prior to your regular resistance-training regime.
6. **Agility:** is the power to move quickly and easily. Having the ability to change directions effectively and efficiently can be aided by balance training. Because agility requires coordination, strength, power and reaction time, having good balance will improve agility.
7. **Long Term Health Effects:** As we age, all the above-mentioned outcomes of balance training will help prevent falls. For more information on this topic, please refer to Body Works' "Preventing Falls" newsletter found online or in the clinic.
8. **Tools and Exercise:** Exercise equipment such as bosus, muscle boards, and stability balls are all excellent tools to help improve balance. But improving balance is as simple as standing tall with good posture and closing your eyes. If you are able to do this effectively, try standing on one leg and closing your eyes. Still too easy? Fold up a towel or stand on a pillow on one leg and close your eyes. These exercise similar to using the previously mentioned equipment. Below are 3 exercises that use a bosu, a muscle board, and a stability ball that will aid in improving balance.

*Bosu Single Leg Balance squats)*



*Muscle Board Tuck and hold (progress to*



*Stability Ball Tall plank*



Online resource: <http://www.passionateaboutfitness.com/blog/the-benefits-of-balance->