

# Healthy You

## Balancing Act

Three moves to help restore your balance and keep you on your feet *By* JEFF CSATARI

**I**F YOU'VE BEEN rendered less active by the pandemic, you can probably see and feel the changes in your body: 36 percent of Americans report they've put on weight during the COVID-19 crisis, an average of 12.5 pounds, according to a survey by WW (formerly Weight Watchers). You may also notice you're not quite as strong as you were; sedentary living can accelerate age-related muscle loss. And with more weight and weaker muscles comes another bodily change: a loss of balance.

Balance is an often-neglected aspect of health. Falls are the second-biggest cause of accidental death after traffic accidents, the World Health Organization reports. So, as life (hopefully) begins to return to normal over the coming months, be extra careful as you reengage with your regular routine. These simple moves will improve your overall coordination and strength, and keep you on your feet.



### Single-Leg Stand

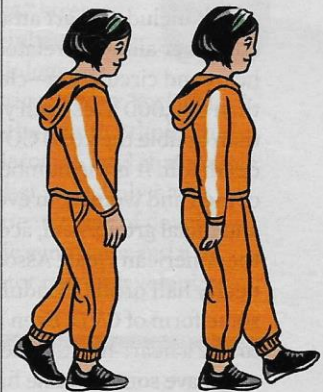
**STEP 1:** Stand behind a chair or facing a kitchen counter, keeping both feet on the floor, hip-width apart. Hold on to the chair for stability.

**STEP 2:** Raise one leg behind you. Next, let go of the chair and stay balanced in this position for between 10 and 15 seconds.

**STEP 3:** Lower your leg, then grab the chair again and repeat the exercise using the opposite leg. As your balance improves, make the drill more challenging by closing your eyes while you balance.

### Heel-Toe Walk

**STEP 1:** Stand beside a wall or kitchen counter, close enough so you can touch it to help you with balance. Lift the foot that's farther from the wall or counter and place it directly in front of your other foot, so your forward foot's heel barely touches your back foot's toes. Balance this way without moving.



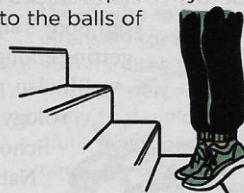
**STEP 2:** When you feel comfortable, try walking forward slowly, heel to toe, heel to toe. When you reach the end of the wall or counter, turn around and walk back in the same way. Once this becomes easy, try walking backward in a reverse toe-to-heel pattern.

### Toe Stand

**STEP 1:** Stand on the lowest step of a set of stairs and hold on to the railing.



**STEP 2:** Place your weight on the balls of your feet and let your heels hang off the step. Slowly push up as far as you can onto the balls of your feet while counting to four. Pause, then count to four as you lower your heels until they're slightly below the step. Pause. Repeat the entire sequence 20 times.



*Fitness and health writer Jeff Csatari is the author of Your Best Body at 40+.*