

get up and go!

It's easy to ignore the balance needed to get up and move—time tends to make many of us feel less certain on our feet. Every year, one in three people over the age of 60 experiences a fall. Many of these falls can be avoided with exercises designed to improve balance. Balance training teaches your brain how to quickly activate the relevant muscles at the appropriate times, pulling your body in the right direction to keep you upright. You won't work up a sweat practicing these moves for about 10 minutes a day because you're training the brain more than the muscles.

WRITTEN BY Irene Lewis McCormick, M.S.,CSCS

PHOTOS BY Kathryn Gamble | BEAUTY STYLING BY Mary-Kate Gales





Chin parallel to the ground

Shoulders back and relaxed

Straight back

Arms relaxed

Feet shoulder-width apart

Get started

Sit on a sturdy chair to enhance the relationship between your joints, muscles, and central nervous system (aka the brain). Regular practice of these moves will stimulate and improve your body-brain communications.



Shoulder Reach Up

Extend your arms in front of your body, lightly resting your hands on your knees (left). Don't lean forward; your shoulders should be relaxed and lowered. Inhale as you raise your arms and straighten wrists to shoulder height (above), then exhale as you return them to the starting position. Do 4–6 repetitions.



Shoulder Reach Out

Start with your arms and hands down by your sides. Slowly raise your arms to shoulder height. Continue to breathe with each repetition. Do 4–6 repetitions.



Seated Squat

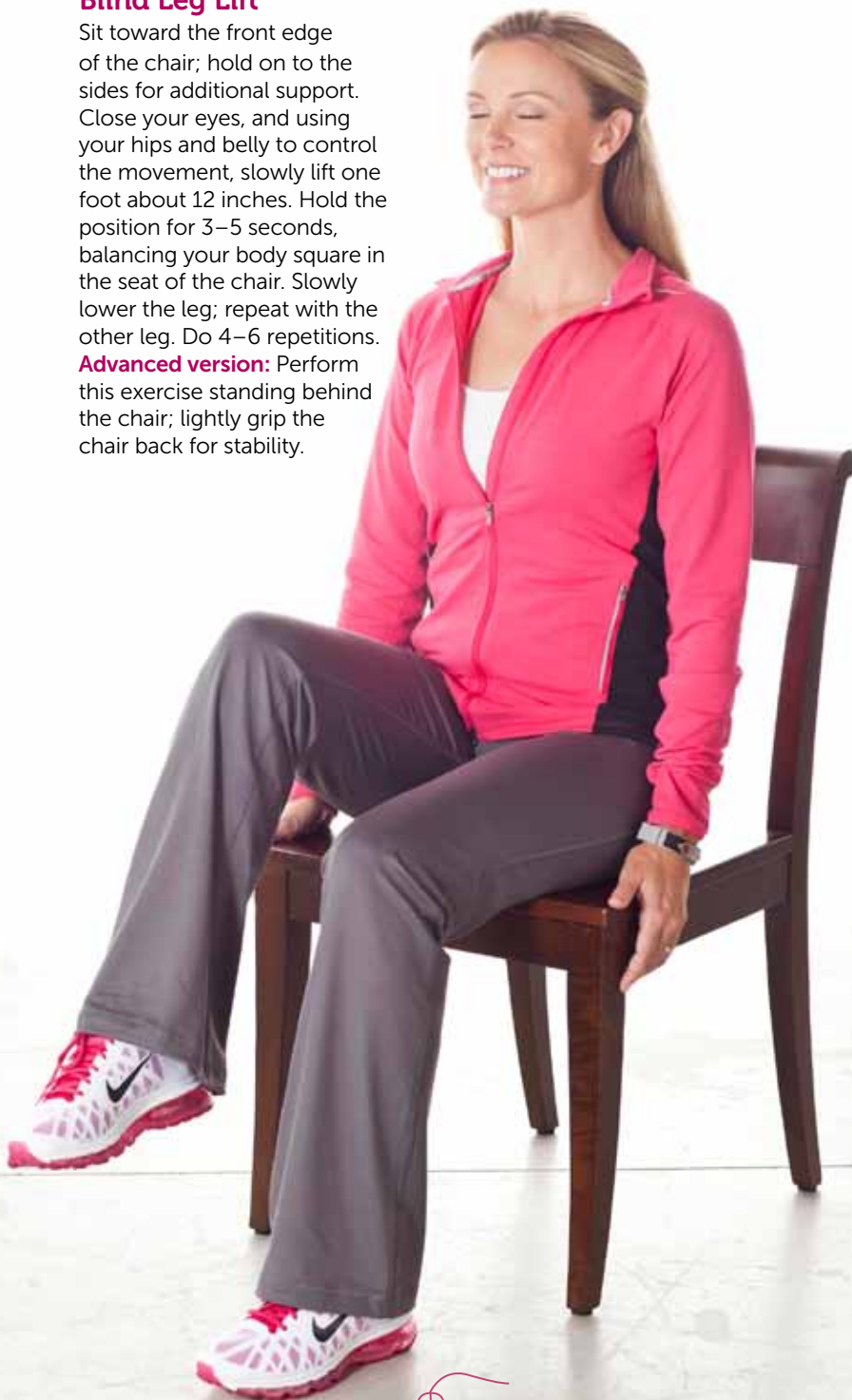
Use this exercise to strengthen your leg muscles and more easily move into and out of a seated position. Start in a standing position with a sturdy chair directly behind you. Slowly lower your body into the chair by flexing the knees and hips, controlling the rate at which your body falls back onto the seat of the chair. Once you are seated, stand up by stepping one foot slightly underneath the chair. Place your hand on the knee of the opposite leg, and use the leverage of your stepped-back foot to raise your body (above). Repeat, alternating legs. Do 8–10 repetitions.

This series of moves helps train your brain and muscles to work together.

Blind Leg Lift

Sit toward the front edge of the chair; hold on to the sides for additional support. Close your eyes, and using your hips and belly to control the movement, slowly lift one foot about 12 inches. Hold the position for 3–5 seconds, balancing your body square in the seat of the chair. Slowly lower the leg; repeat with the other leg. Do 4–6 repetitions.

Advanced version: Perform this exercise standing behind the chair; lightly grip the chair back for stability.



Seated Step Touch

A. Sit toward the front edge of the chair with both feet planted firmly on the floor hip-width apart. Hold on to the sides of the chair for support. **B.** Step your feet, one at a time, to the side of the chair, planting each foot on the ground. Then step each foot back to the start. Step each foot to the opposite side and return to start. Do 8–10 repetitions.



For more balance exercises go to
DiabeticLivingOnline.com/xxxxxx