

Strong Women Strong Bones

How Good Is Your Balance?

Balance is an important factor in preventing bone fractures. Osteoporosis may weaken bones, but the lack of balance causes falls, which fracture your bones.

Try these series of tests to check your balance!

(From Strong Women, Strong Bones by Miriam E. Nelson, Ph.D.)

Pretest

Stand in front of the counter with your feet side-by-side and touching. If you cannot maintain that position for ten seconds without using your hands for support, your balance is extremely poor. *Do not attempt the other tests.*

Test 1: Tandem stand

- Stand to the side of the counter, and put your hand on it for support.
- Position one foot directly in front of the other; the heel of the front foot should be just touching the toes of the foot in the back. Try to distribute your body weight evenly on your two feet.
- Steady yourself and let go of the counter.
- Hold this position for ten seconds, without the aid of your hands. Your toes may wriggle slightly during the test, subtly redistributing your weight to maintain your balance. But your feet should not leave the floor.

Test 2: One-legged stand

- Stand to the side of the counter with your feet together. Put your hand on the counter for support.
- Shift your weight to one foot. Bend the other knee to bring the foot up in back.
- When you're balanced on one leg, let go of the counter – but keep your hands poised so you can catch yourself if necessary.

Test 3: Tandem stand with eyes closed

- Stand to the side of the counter, and put your hand on it for support.
- Position one foot directly in front of the other; the heel of the front foot should be just touching the toes of the foot in the back. Try to distribute your body weight evenly on your two feet.
- Close your eyes.
- Steady yourself and let go of the counter. Attempt to hold the position for ten seconds.

Test 4: Tandem stand with eyes closed and head turning

- Stand to the side of the counter, and put your hand on it for support.
- Position one foot directly in front of the other; the heel of the front foot should be just touching the toes of the foot in the back. Try to distribute your body weight evenly on your two feet.
- Close your eyes. Steady yourself and let go of the counter.

Before you begin, here are a few precautions:

- The tests are arranged by increasing difficulty. Therefore, it is important that you do them in order. If you cannot complete a test, do not attempt the rest because you could fall and hurt yourself.
- Stand near a counter to catch yourself if necessary. If you try the tests with your eyes closed, *you must have a spotter.*
- Wear sturdy, supportive shoes without heels. Good shoes add to your stability.
- Practice once or twice before you take a test. But don't try the next test unless you can pass the previous one.

- Slowly turn your head to the right; then slowly turn it all the way to the left, and then return to face front.
- Take about ten seconds to complete the turns from right to left to centre.

Test 5: One-legged stand with eyes closed

- Stand to the side of the counter with your feet together. Put your hand on the counter for support.
- Shift your weight to one foot. Bend the other knee to bring the foot up in back.
- When you're balanced on one leg, close your eyes.
- Let go of the counter – but keep your hands poised so you can catch yourself if necessary. Try to hold this position for ten seconds.

If the highest test you could pass was:	Your balance is:
Test 5: One-legged stand with eyes closed	Excellent
Test 4: Tandem stand with eyes closed and head turning	Very good
Test 3: Tandem stand with eyes closed	Good
Test 2: One-legged stand	Fair
Test 1: Tandem stand	Poor
Unable to pass any tests	Very poor

Age and Physical Status	Expected Result
Healthy woman under age 35	Excellent (with a little practice)
35 to 50 with no physical handicaps	Good
Older women	Fair
Frail woman in her eighties or nineties	Poor to very poor

Your balance can be improved significantly regardless of age, so please don't be discouraged if your results were disappointing!

Helpful Links

Please visit <http://www.strongwomen.com/strongbones/> for more information on the Strong Bone Program.

For articles on Strong Bones, please see http://www.strongwomen.com/articles/index.htm#strong_bones.

You can also subscribe to free StrongWomen Newsletters at <http://www.strongwomen.com/newsletter/>.

You can find some great recipes that include foods which improve bone health at <http://www.strongwomen.com/recipes/>.