Learn to Have Better Balance and Prevent Falls as You Age

年齢を重ねても元気に動き続けるには、筋力だけでなく、体のバランスを保つ力も大切です。アメリカの医師や専門家は、転倒の危険を減らすため、早い時期から自分の体の状態に目を向け、日常的に運動することを勧めています。身近な場所で無理なくできる方法も紹介されていますが、あなたならどんな運動を習慣にしたいですか。運動を長く続けるには何が必要だと思いますか。

1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

To age well, doctors say we should remember the importance of good balance. It matters when you wash yourself, put clothing on and, generally, move around in your home and elsewhere. As we age, good balance permits us to live more **independently**.

Difficulties with balance can be dangerous. The United States Centers for Disease Control reports that three million older people in America seek medical care for fall-related injuries each year. But we can prevent some falls, said Roopa Anmolsingh. She is a geriatrician, a doctor who specializes in treating old people. She is also the creator of the balance class program at Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. She said that "Some people have a **misconception** that part of getting old is, you're going to fall. That's not true. You can control how you fall, or if you fall."

To prevent falls, geriatricians say people should start asking themselves questions about their balance as early as 50 years old. Here are the questions:

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Do I ever feel unsteady?

If you feel unsteady, or lose balance, from time to time, ask your doctor to check all your body systems that can affect balance. Along with muscle and bone problems, unsteadiness can also result from poor blood pressure, inner-ear problems, nervous system issues and more.

Maybe you do not have unsteadiness but wonder about your skill at balancing. You can test yourself easily and at home to find out if you need any medical intervention.

Stand next to a wall or something that can provide support if needed. Raise one leg. Can you hold that position for 10 seconds? Now try the other leg. If you can stand on each leg alone for 10 seconds, you should be fine, said Greg W. Hartley, a professor of **physical** therapy specializing in geriatrics at the University of Miami in Florida.

"If you can't do that, then you should probably go see a physical therapist," he said. A physical therapist treats people with conditions or injuries that affect body movement.

Another at-home test is called TUG, for "timed up and go." Hartley suggests doing this test with supervision. You begin the test from a seated position. Then, stand up and start a timer immediately. Walk three meters, turn and walk back to your seat. Stop the timer as soon as you sit down. If the test takes you longer to complete than 15 seconds, your **risk** for falling is very high. But, if you do it in 12 seconds or less, your fall risk is almost zero.

Also, The National Council on Aging offers an online set of questions to predict your risk of a fall.

What can I do to improve balance?

Because muscle mass lessens in most people during their 30s, geriatricians say the best way to keep good balance is to stay physically active throughout life. Anmolsingh says it is never too late to act on that advice.

Activities including tai chi and yoga are good for older adults because they involve controlled movements while shifting body weight. There also are simpler exercises people can work into their everyday lives.

Anmolsingh says standing on one foot while waiting in line at a store is good. Or, at home, sit down and stand up several times straight without using a support. Another easy exercise is the three-way leg lift. Hold on to a support, then lift a leg to the front, then to the side and then to the back.

How often should I do the exercises?

The National Institute of Aging says people should spend at least 150 minutes per week in general physical activity to improve balance and **overall** health.

Hartley said exercises done on a usual basis help train the brain to react correctly when you start to fall.

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"Just like an athlete needs to do repetition to train for a sport, you're doing repetition to train for everyday balance activities," he said.

Albert Stumm reported this story for the Associated Press. Jill Robbins adapted it for Learning English.

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. independently (adv.) without needing help from other people
Miwa completed her science project **independently**.

2. misconception (n.) a wrong idea or belief
Many people have the **misconception** that all spiders are dangerous.

3. physical (adj.) related to the body
Regular **physical** activity can improve your mood and get rid of stress.

4. risk (n.) the chance that something bad may happen
Driving too fast makes the **risk** of an accident higher.

5. overall (adj.) including everything; general
Our volleyball team lost the first two games, but we won the **overall** competition.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. **Why is good balance important as people get older?**
2. **What simple one-leg test does Greg Hartley recommend?**
3. **How much physical activity does the National Institute of Aging recommend each week?**
4. **What balance exercises do you think are easy to do every day?**
5. **Why do you think many people stop exercising as they get older?**

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