

Vancouver Regional Pediatric Team

BALANCE

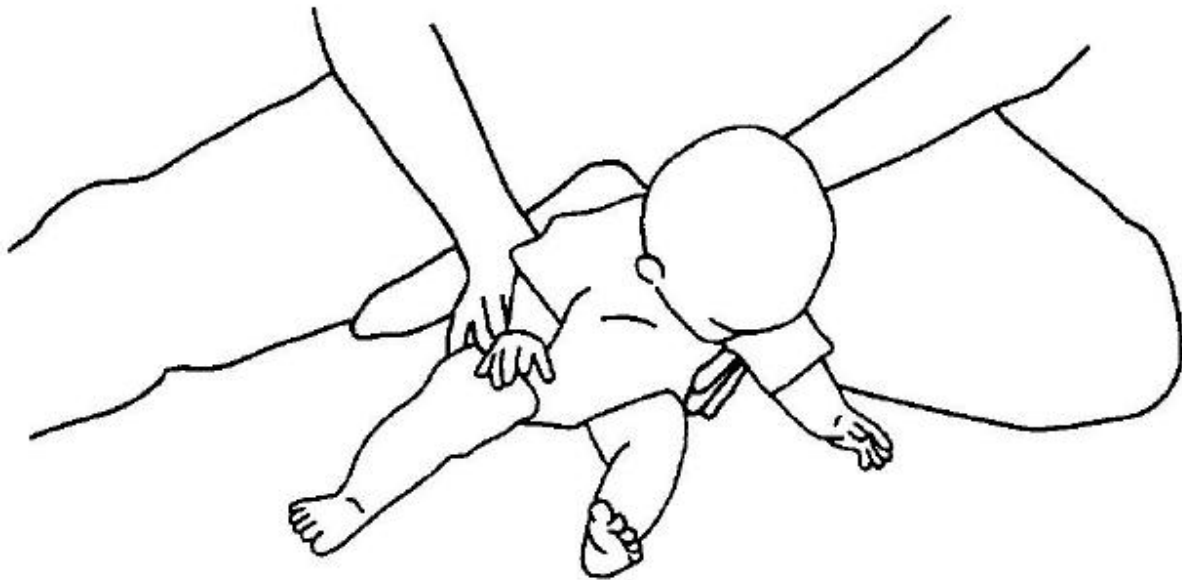
What is balance?

Balance is the ability to keep one's weight within one's base of support with minimal sway. The base of support of a child who is standing would be the distance between his/her feet.


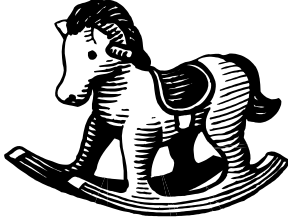
How does balance affect my child/student?


Children challenge their balance many times a day – walking on rough ground, bumping into other children, walking on a curb. Their bodies react during all these activities to prevent falling and to protect themselves when they do. These are balance reactions. Some examples of balance reactions are putting hands out and taking recovering steps. Children's bodies need challenges to strengthen reactions and develop balance strategies.

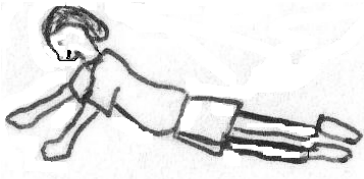


Some children avoid precarious activities so that they don't ever have the opportunity to develop and strengthen these reactions.

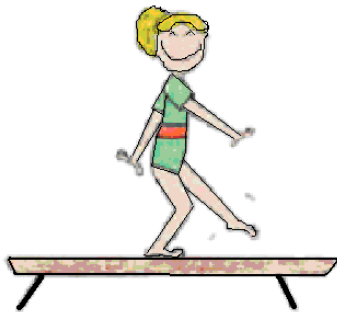


The following activities can help your child with his or her balance:

<p>Sitting – when placed or assisted into the position (on the floor)</p>  	<p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit cross-legged with arm support • Sit cross-legged without arm support • Sit long-sitting (legs out in front) with arm support • Sit long-sitting without arm support • Side sit to each side with arm support • Side sit to each side without arm support • Pull child in wagon while child maintains sitting balance • Rocking horse / swing <p><u>Tips</u></p> <p>* Increase the difficulty by having the student reach for an object, which can be placed in various positions – face height, to the right, to the left, in front, etc.</p> <p>* Moving the object further away from the student so they lean or shift their center of gravity in order to reach the object increases the difficulty</p>
<p>Sitting – when assuming position unassisted</p>	<p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain balance in above positions <p><u>Tips</u></p> <p>* To increase the difficulty in sitting, have the student hold their arms up in the air while you move their feet and legs. This moves them off-center so that they need to work harder to keep their balance. This can be a game of “boat in a storm – trying to keep the sails out of the water.”</p>

<p>Four point kneeling</p> 	<p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain position on hands and knees with elbows straight • Lift one hand up and replaces it on the ground • Move one leg forward and backward • Crawl forward on hands and knees – in any manner • Crawl forward on hands and knees using alternate hand and leg • Crawl backwards – in any manner • Lift one arm/leg up and stretches it out straight • Lift opposite arm and leg up at the same time • Lift arm and leg on the same side at the same time <p><u>Tips</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Do activities on a mat so that the student will be more comfortable and less anxious *If student is unable to maintain themselves in this position, a support can be placed under their chest so that they do not need to take all the weight through their arms *To encourage a student to lift a hand, place a toy or object in front for them to reach *Crawl forward, under and around objects
<p>Kneeling – from the four point kneeling or crawling position</p>	<p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach for objects, throw/catch a ball, etc. • Kick ball with knee • Walk forwards on knees • Walk backwards on knees • Tug-of-war in kneeling, standing • Kneel-walking

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal walks (cat, bear, snake, horse, duck, rabbit, frog) <p>Tips</p> <p>*Student may initially require assistance to get into the position and may require some support (holding onto assistant's hands or a fixed object)</p>
<p>Half kneeling – from kneeling position, student brings one leg up so that foot is on the ground</p> 	<p>Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switch from one foot forward to the other foot forward • Go to standing position from half kneeling with each leg forward • Wrestling with pillows or stuffed animals • Climbing up/down slide and ladder <p>Tips</p> <p>*Student may require demonstration initially Standing/Walking</p>
<p>Standing / Walking</p> 	<p>Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing on tip toes • Try to stand in place with feet in heel to toe position • Walk within a path (two masking tape lines on floor) and gradually move closer until walking on a line • Encourage walking on different surfaces: sand, grass, carpet, wooden plank covered in textured materials, foam/air mattress • Practice standing on one foot: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stand on one foot with other foot resting on large ball ○ Play Simon Says ○ Lift foot while adult puts on or takes off shoes



- Put foot on low stool or telephone book when colouring at a table
 - Pop bubbles when they land on the floor
 - Kick a ball, bubbles, or balloon from the air
 - Rock back and forth to a song, raising leg that weight is not on
 - Encourage to step onto curb or step
 - Stand on one foot while holding on to a chair on either side, while counting the time
 - Make a game of who can stand on one foot the longest – letting the child win sometimes
 - Pick up small objects using feet instead of hands (ie: cotton balls)
- Picking up toys from the floor, gather in bucket
 - Stepping over broomsticks / ropes / blocks
 - Stepping in and out of boxes (may be cut down), hoops
 - Walking along curbs, driveways, steps, rope / footprints on the ground, railroad ties, ladder, edge of sandbox
 - Walking and carrying large objects / water balloons
 - Ask child to help carry a large box: he or she holds one end and walks backwards while you hold the other
 - Pull doll in a wagon or box with a string by walking backwards
 - Batting at a tether ball

Tips

*Have the student stand close to wall initially for support if needed

*Have the student look at a target on the wall to help with balance

Some fun balance games:



Progress

- Stop-start and change of direction games (red light-green light, freeze, Mother may I, musical chairs)
- Feather race – children race while keeping a feather or balloon on a plate without using hands or body to hold the feather on the plate

Adaptations:

Upper body impairment: The child may use a thumb to hold the feather. The child may carry a heavier object, such as a beanbag.
Lower body impairment: a classmate may run along and pick up the feather if it drops, a teammate runs with the child.

- Ankle race - children hold on to ankles (if possible) as they hop toward another line 15 feet away.

Adaptations:

Upper body impairment: If the child has difficulty reaching the ankles, knees or hips may be held.

Lower body impairment: A teammate runs part way for the child, with the child, or the child walks.

Wheelchair user: The child may hold ankles, knees or hips while being pushed. A teammate runs part way for the child.

Hearing Impairment: Use visual cues

Visual impairment: Use touch and auditory cues to explain to child, and touch knees or hips if the child has difficulty with balance.

TO PROGRESS ANY ACTIVITIES, GRADUALLY INCREASE TIME OR DISTANCE EXPECTATIONS OR TRY WITH EYES CLOSED

Individual balancing challenges

