

Aging Gracefully - Finding Time for Balance

With the unseasonably warm weather followed by periods of more normal below zero temperature, the amount of ice on the sidewalks and streets seems to be abnormally high and the risk of falling an ever-growing concern in the minds of residents. With that in mind, more and more people want to know what they can do to help decrease their chance of falling. Balance exercises are a big part of fall prevention, but many may not know how to incorporate these balance exercises in to their already busy lives(exercise routines). The good news is that balance exercises do not need to be an entirely separate exercise program. They can be incorporated in to your current exercise routine and even incorporated with your daily functional activities. The recommendation for balance exercises is *5-10 minutes daily*, however those 5-10 minutes do not have to be done all at once. They can be spread out in to short increments throughout your day. You can work on your balance while standing in the line at the grocery store or while washing your dishes at the kitchen sink. One of my favourite times to recommend working on your balance is while brushing your teeth. Most people brush their teeth at least 2 times per day for an average of 2 minutes. Try standing with your feet close together, or in stride stance, or with one foot in front of the other in a tandem stance while you brush your teeth. The movement in your arm from doing the brushing motion will challenge your balance when you are standing with a narrow base of support in one of the above mentioned stances. Since you typically brush for 2 minutes, two times per day, you will have already added 4 minutes of balance exercises in to your daily routine without adding any extra time to the activity. All you then have to do is find time for 1-6 more minutes each day to meet the recommendation. Balance exercises do not have to take a lot of your time, but the time you do take will be well worth it if it prevents an injury due to a fall.

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