

# Jeni's Health & Fitness Tips

To view previous newsletters go to [www.advancedhealthfitness.com.au](http://www.advancedhealthfitness.com.au)

Issue 67 / Nov. 2011

---

Hi Everyone!

As we age, many things deteriorate. Such as muscle strength, bone density, eye sight and lung capacity. It is a natural part of the aging process. Some people age much better than others. Regular exercise and a healthy diet will help delay the ageing process and some things can be helped with a little additional work such as balance. Our ability to balance is just one of those things that naturally declines with age. If you feel particularly unsteady on your feet, it's a good idea to get this checked out by your doctor. You could have something like a middle ear problem. Bad balance can result in a fall which, in an elderly person, can be fatal. Each year in Australia many elderly people are hospitalized following a fall. Many of these are unable to live independently again.

So what can be done to decrease your risk of falling?

**Check your home for tripping hazards.** Such as rugs, electrical cords and objects (such as the vacuum cleaner or kids toys left lying around). Be aware of slippery when wet surfaces. Ensure that there is adequate lighting. I have also come across many people who have tripped over their pets!

**Ensure you have the correct eye glasses.** Get your eyes checked regularly to ensure you have the best vision you can. Beware of bifocals when descending/climbing stairs as the angle of vision when looking at the steps can get distorted.

**Wear sensible footwear.** Flat shoes that fit correctly with non-slip soles. Lift your feet when walking.

**Exercise regularly.** Strong legs can help prevent a fall. Make sure your exercise regime includes strengthening work for your legs. You also need some flexibility training to enable you to take longer or wider steps to avoid tripping hazards. Practicing Tai Chi regularly has been proven to improve balance.

**Practice exercises to improve your balance daily.** Here are a few you can try. Always ensure that you are close to a wall or an object that you can hold onto when carrying these out (just in case!).

- Walk the line: Try walking along a line with heel in front of toes. Try this slowly and also quickly.
- Stationary tandem balance: Step one foot in front of the other with heel touching front of back foot. If this is too challenging, leave a slightly wider space between the feet. Focus on a stationary object in the distance and then try closing your eyes. See if you can count to 10 before opening the eyes.
- Take the opportunity to stand on one leg. You could try this while cleaning your teeth for example.
- Take large steps in all directions. Forward, sideways, backwards and at any angle. Try this slowly and quickly. You never know when the need to step away from an object may arise.
- Try throwing and catching a small ball while walking. Of course make sure you have clearway before starting this one.
- If you get the opportunity to walk on an uneven surface, providing you feel confident, then take it. The more practice you have at walking on an uneven surface, the more skilled you will become at this and hence the more your balance skills will improve. A walking stick or steady friend with arm to hold may help with this one.

Spending a little time each day working at improving your strength, flexibility, fitness and balance will help you live a full, active and independent life through to your most senior years. So keep active and never give up!

Yours in health,

*Jeni*