



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY **THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCING POSTURES**

Strong, supple leg muscles are vital for coordination and balance and for avoiding falls that could lead to broken bones. As we age, our balance tends to get less reliable.

Why does our ability to balance decrease with age?

Staying upright while we walk, jump etc. involves a complex interplay between brain, eyes, inner ears and the body's sensory systems (muscles, joints, skin etc.). The eye sends signals to your brain regarding your orientation in space. Your sense of touch, changes in the angles of your joints, muscle responses to changes in position all send signals to the brain as to what needs to be done to keep you upright.

The fluid in your inner ear canals detect head movement and if you tilt your head, sensors are triggered which sends a message to your brain, so you don't fall in the direction of the tilt of the head.

All together, these body parts make up the vestibular system, the body system responsible for balance.

If the vestibular system determines you're about to fall, it signals the brain to take immediate corrective action to prevent a fall. As we age, the vestibular system gets less efficient as the cells involved start to die off. Eyesight may become less efficient and muscle loss can occur.

Effective yoga balancing postures stimulate the vestibular system to help prevent fractures. Balancing postures use the action of muscle on bone to build bone density and enhance balance at the same time.

Many studies have been carried out which showed that ninety-six percent of fractures are associated with a fall.

Studies also show that leg strength is linked to falls. Increasing lower limb muscle strength is effective for reducing the likelihood of a fall. Strength, balance and flexibility are critical for preventing falls. People with a weak lower body are four times more likely to fall.

YOGA POSTURES FOR STRENGTH, BALANCE AND FLEXIBILITY

<p>TADASANA (mountain) Improves posture Strengthens thighs, knees, and ankles Firms abdomen and buttocks</p>	
<p>SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA (hand to big toe) Stretches hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins, and calves Strengthens the knees Stimulates the prostate gland Improves digestion Relieves backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort Therapeutic for high blood pressure</p>	
<p>TRIKONASANA (triangle) Stretches and strengthens the thighs, knees, and ankles Stretches the hips, groins, hamstrings, and calves; shoulders, chest, and spine Stimulates the abdominal organs Helps relieve stress Improves digestion</p>	
<p>PARSVAKONASANA (extended side angle) Strengthens and stretches the legs, knees, and ankles Stretches the groins, spine, waist, chest and lungs, and shoulders Stimulates abdominal organs Increases stamina</p>	
<p>VRKSASANA (tree) Improves balance stretches inner thigh and front of thigh while strengthening your outer thigh and buttocks Stretches around your shoulders Strengthens your core Improves postural and body awareness</p>	
<p>VIRABHADRASANA III (warrior III) Strengthens the ankles and legs Strengthens the shoulders and muscles of the back Tones the abdomen Improves balance and posture</p>	
<p>ARDHA CHANDRASANA (half-moon) Strengthens the spine Stretches the shoulders, chest and spine Improves coordination and sense of balance Improves digestion</p>	
<p>GARUDASANA (eagle) Strengthens and stretches the ankles and calves Stretches the thighs, hips, shoulders, and upper back Improves concentration Improves sense of balance</p>	