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Patient handout for reactive balance training

Reactive balance training: what is it?

Types of balance exercises

During rehabilitation, you may participate in **exercises to improve your balance**. These include activities that you practice to improve your stability while sitting, standing or while walking.

Static balance

There are different types of balance exercises. You may be asked to get into a position, like standing on one leg, or with one foot ahead of the other, and attempt to hold that position for a specific period of time. This position-holding is good practice for improving **static balance**.



Static balance example:
standing on one leg



Dynamic balance

You may be asked to ‘keep your balance’ as you move, for example, from step to step or when reaching. This kind of practice during movement targets a second kind of balance, called **dynamic balance**.

Dynamic balance examples: reaching overhead for an item, practicing Tai Chi, or playing tennis.

Reactive balance

Reactive balance is the kind of balance that you need to recover your balance should you stumble, trip, or get bumped, or jostled. Reactive balance requires you to step very quickly when you have lost your balance, to prevent a fall.



Reactive balance example: losing balance on an icy sidewalk



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Reactive balance training

About reactive balance training

In order for you to re-learn reactive balance, you need to lose your balance so that you can practice recovering with rapid steps. This is called **reactive balance training**.

Safety

Reactive balance training is done in a safe, supportive, supervised environment. You will wear a harness attached to an overhead support. The harness is worn so that when you lose your balance, you will not fall all the way to the floor. Your therapist will be there as well to assist you should you be unable to



Safety harness

What to expect?

The therapist is present to make certain that you lose your balance. They will do this in one of two ways:

1. they will have you practice tasks that gradually challenge your balance and result in a loss of balance, or
2. they will gradually pull or push you until you lose your balance.

The goal of reactive balance training is for you to take fast steps to recover your without assistance.



Example of task to challenge balance: tapping on unstable surfaces with alternating feet



Example of 'pull' by therapist to left