

Balance training

Balance is something most of us take for granted until we fall. Although our ability to balance is hard wired during our early development; watch a child learn to sit, walk, cycle and you can easily see its not something we are born with, it is a skill that fades with age or dis-use.

Good balance is not just about stopping yourself from falling over; it is about having the co-ordination, agility and functional ability to stop yourself falling over regardless of your activity or sport.

Consider a long distance runner, if they have good balance they are able to conserve energy and run faster for longer. A weightlifter is more powerful and stronger with a stable platform to push or lift. Balance is very important to our every day and sporting lives and if trained can lead to a stronger, more powerful and injury free you!

Our ability to balance depends on information from our eyes, ears and proprioceptive organs (e.g. stretch receptors in tendons). Try this quick balance test to challenge these systems; stand on one leg, close one eye then shake your head. Not so easy is it?

There are two main balance reflexes that you can train, these are the:

- Tilting reflex: When the surface is moving as in a wobble board or vibrating plate.
- Righting reflex: When your surface is still and you try and stop yourself from falling over as in standing on one leg or performing lunges.

Combining training for both reflexes is best since they do not work in isolation.

Here are two simple exercises to improve your balance

- 1) Stand on one leg for 30 seconds, increasing the time as you progress. To challenge yourself further, try closing both your eyes.
- 2) Start by standing on one leg, take the other leg out in front of you (further away from your centre of gravity), then take the same leg out to the side then behind you.



3) To incorporate upper and lower body lunge the leg forwards whilst rotating your torso towards the lunging leg, then away from it. This move can also be performed with a backwards or sideways lunge. (Picture)

For further information or to book your appointment with Zac Beard at The Manor Lodge practice please call 01934 750 419