

FOCUS FOR THIS WEEK

balance!

What is balance and why is it so important?

Balance, essential for maintaining body position during activities, relies on the vestibular system, integrating feedback from visual and proprioceptive systems. When these systems aren't fully functional, achieving balance becomes challenging.

Static balance pertains to stationary tasks like sitting or standing, while dynamic balance is required for moving activities like running or jumping. Since balance underpins daily movement, it's crucial to cultivate. Children with good balance can perform motor tasks more effectively due to stabilized bodies from strong core muscles.

Thus, for children to develop strong balance, accurate sensory processing and a robust core are imperative.

How can I tell my child had balance issues?

- Fall easily "clumsy"
- Avoid physical activity (e.g. playground use, sports participation).
- Poor spatial awareness (have trouble navigating environments)
- Moves stiffly and lack fluid body movement (e.g. run like a 'robot').
- Poor hand-eye coordination

How to improve my child's balance?

- Improve overall sensory processing (particularly visual & vestibular systems)
- Strengthen the core muscles
- Improve muscle strength and endurance
- Simplify tasks (concentrate on one movement at a time)



activities for 4-8 years

1. Practice standing on one leg during daily routine activities i.e. brushing teeth, washing hands. Progress to bending and picking items up off the floor. Repeat 2-4 times on each leg.
2. Use a jump rope or piece of string to create a line to walk on. Heel-to-toe forwards and backwards. Add toys on the line as obstacles.
3. Yoga. (Tree, cat and cow, airplane, mountain, downward-facing dog and forward bend poses.)
4. Stand on an uneven surface i.e. a pillow/rolled blanket. Progress to one leg and completing activities e.g. building a puzzle while balancing.
5. Create an obstacle course from pillows and chairs to climb over and crawl under.
6. Pick a sturdy flat surface e.g a wooden board, that's wide enough to stand on with a spread stance. Place a tennis ball underneath and let child balance back and forth trying to keep the board on the ball (see-saw effect).
7. Take a sturdy ladder, or any sturdy objects that can be used as stepping stones. Suspend the ladder lying horizontally just a few centimeters above the ground. Challenge your child to walk on the ladder/objects from one side to the other. You can suspend the ladder at different heights to make it more challenging.

*Kinderkinetics Regards
Jeanne Botha*

