

Maintain Balance with These Hip and Knee Exercises

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Hip abductor muscles are crucial for balance control, helping with lateral stability, stepping in multiple directions, obstacle walking, and preventing falls that cause global health concerns
- › Hip stabilizer exercise using foam roller — Stand beside wall, place foam roller between wall and thigh, perform single-leg squats while maintaining balance and control
- › Hip flexor stretches include half-kneeling, 90/90 position, supine bed stretch, and side-lying variations to improve flexibility and reduce injury risk in the hip area
- › Advanced athletic exercises like hamstring bridges with resistance bands, front planks with hip flexion, and standing knee lifts boost muscle propulsion for fitness goals
- › Knee-strengthening exercises that support overall balance include straight leg raises, wall sits, glute bridges, step-ups, and clamshells target weight-bearing joints and surrounding muscles

According to a study published in the Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, falls (and the injuries resulting from them) are a global health concern. Now, at the core of this problem is muscle fitness, “which is essential for balance recovery and fall avoidance.”¹

While you may not consciously think about it, your hips contain one of the most important muscles in your body, particularly the abductors. As noted by the researchers:²

“Hip abductor muscle function contributes to lateral balance control and influences balance with aging in tasks such as stepping in multiple directions, obstacle walking, and standing balance.”

In essence, your hips play a huge part in keeping your body’s ability to move. These include rotating your legs, flexing your legs, supporting your weight, and walking. If your hip muscles become weak, then your balance is affected. To keep them strong, the best recourse is implementing a diverse muscle-strengthening routine, and there are many that can be done in the comfort of your own home.

Try This Simple Hip Stabilizer Exercise

[Video Link](#)

In an article for Fit & Well, physical therapist Sanjit Kooner shares that if you’re experiencing recurring injuries to the hips, the culprit is most likely your hip stabilizers. To solve this problem, Kooner shares the following exercise, which is designed to help improve hip stability. Knee stability also gets a huge boost, which is important for balance.³

1. Stand parallel beside a wall.
2. Place a foam roller between the wall and the thigh close to the wall.
3. Raise your foot backward, using the foam roller to stabilize your weight against the wall.
4. Slowly lower your other leg (the one that doesn’t have a foam roller). You will look like you’re doing a single-leg squat.
5. While lowering your leg, swing your arms as if you’re walking to help maintain balance.
6. Complete two sets of 10 to 12 repetitions for each leg, two to three times a week.

- **Additional pointers** – Done correctly, Kooner says that you'll feel a deep burn in your glutes and other hip stabilizers. In other words, you'll know your muscles are working hard and will eventually become stronger the more you do the exercise.
- **A convenient exercise** – Kooner explains that you don't need to do a full range of motion with this exercise. "The goal is to maintain control, tension, and alignment rather than chase depth," he says.

Additional Hip Flexor Exercises

In addition to Kooner's exercise, there are other ways to help you improve your hip flexor muscles. Here are four exercises from the Hospital for Special Surgery:⁴

- **Half-kneeling hip flexor stretch**

1. Begin by kneeling on the floor. Bring your right leg in front of you so that your right thigh is parallel to the floor, with your knee bent at a 90-degree angle and your foot flat on the floor.
2. Leave your left knee on the floor, making sure that your shin is pointing straight back (not toward the left or right).
3. Put your hands on your hips, then bring your thumbs downward, contract your glutes, and feel your pelvis tuck under you.
4. With your back straight, shift your weight forward until you feel a stretch through the front of the left thigh and groin.
5. For an even deeper stretch, reach your left arm up overhead and slightly toward the right. Repeat on the other side.

- **90/90 stretch**

1. Sit on the floor with your right leg in front of you and your knee bent at a 90-degree angle, so the bottom of your foot is facing the left wall.

2. Extend your left leg out to the side and bend your knee at a 90-degree angle, so the bottom of your foot is facing the back wall. Square your shoulders to the front.
3. To check that your back remains straight, extend your arms straight out in front of you. Your fingertips should face the front wall.
4. Place your fingertips on either side of your right shin for balance. Think about sinking both hips into the floor.
5. For an even deeper stretch, lean your chest as far forward as you can go without collapsing your upper body or losing the connection between your hips and the floor. Repeat on the other side.

- **Supine hip flexor stretch**

1. Lie on your back on the right edge of your bed with both legs extended on the bed.
2. Bend your left leg, with your knee pointing toward the ceiling and your foot flat on the bed. Make sure your back is pressed flat against the bed. Let your right leg fall off the side of the bed, keeping your back flat.
3. Bend your knee back as far as you can, keeping your back flat and right leg hanging off the bed.
4. For an even deeper stretch, grab your left knee and pull it toward your chest. Repeat on the other side.

- **Side-lying hip flexor stretch**

1. Lie on the floor on your left side with your knees bent so they're in line with your hips. Your thighs and shins should form a 90-degree angle.

2. Move your right foot backward and gently grab the top of the ankle with your right hand.
3. Slowly and gently pull your foot with your right hand, bringing your leg around behind you while keeping your pelvis tucked under and being careful not to arch your back. You should feel a stretch in the front of your thighs and your hip flexor on the right side. Repeat on the opposite side.

Now, what if you're quite athletic or generally fit, and looking for an extra boost on your hip flexors' agility? Here are other exercises from Runner's World. These are geared towards boosting muscle propulsion, which can benefit your athletic goals:⁵

- **Hamstring bridge with banded hip flexion**

1. Have both heels elevated on a bench. Keep the pelvis in line with your knee and use your hands to stabilize on the floor if needed.
2. With a looped resistance band around your feet, pull your knee to your chest and lower again.
3. Repeat, then do the same for the other leg. Do three sets of eight repetitions for each side.

- **Front plank with banded hip flexion**

1. Start in a plank position with your pelvis in line with your chest.
2. With a resistance band around your feet, pull your knee to your chest and lower.
3. Maintain the same starting position throughout. Repeat. Do three sets of eight repetitions for each side.

- **Standing knee lift**

1. Standing on a high enough surface to clear the foot, hold a kettlebell in front of your foot.

2. Lift the knee towards your chest and keep the opposite heel raised throughout.
3. Lower the hip and repeat. Do three sets of eight repetitions for each side.

Don't Leave Your Knees Out of the Picture

In addition to your hips, your knees are crucial for balance. In fact, they are the largest weight-bearing joints in your body. While technically classified as hinge joints, they are capable of a wide range of movements to support all the movement your body needs to do for its day-to-day activities.⁶ Therefore, supporting your knees with targeted strengthening exercises will also improve your balance.

Try these five knee-strengthening exercises courtesy of Alleviate. The great thing about these exercises is that they also make use of the gluteal and hip flexor muscles, ensuring strong hips all around:⁷

- **Straight leg raises**

1. Lie flat on your back on a comfortable surface, such as a yoga mat or carpet. Keep one leg bent at the knee with the foot flat on the floor for support. The other leg should remain straight, fully extended.
2. Slowly lift the straight leg to a height of 6 to 8 inches from the ground. Ensure the movement is controlled and smooth.
3. Hold the lifted position for 5 seconds while keeping the muscle engaged. Slowly lower the leg back to the floor in a controlled manner, avoiding any jerky motion.

- **Wall sits**

1. Stand upright with your back flat against a sturdy wall. Position your feet shoulder-width apart and approximately 1 to 2 feet away from the wall to ensure proper alignment during the exercise.

2. Slowly slide your back down the wall, bending your knees as you descend.
3. Stop when your knees are at a 90-degree angle, forming a straight line from your knees to your toes. Your thighs should be parallel to the floor. Keep your knees aligned over your ankles, avoiding inward or outward collapse.
4. Engage your core muscles and keep your back pressed against the wall. Maintain the position for 10 to 30 seconds, or longer as you build strength. Breathe evenly, avoiding holding your breath.
5. Slowly slide back up the wall to a standing position. Aim for three to five repetitions initially, gradually increasing as your strength improves.

- **Glute bridges**

1. Lie on your back on a flat, stable surface like a mat or carpet. Bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor, hip-width apart. Keep your arms at your sides with palms facing down for stability.
2. Push through your heels and lift your hips toward the ceiling. Aim to form a straight line from your shoulders to your knees at the top of the movement. Avoid overarching your lower back; the lift should come from your glutes, not your spine.
3. Hold the bridge position for two to three seconds, maintaining a firm squeeze in your glutes. Slowly lower your hips back to the floor while maintaining control. Avoid dropping abruptly to keep tension in the glutes and hamstrings.
4. Perform 10 to 15 repetitions. You can add more sets or hold the top position longer as you progress.

- **Step-ups**

1. Place your right foot firmly on the step or platform. Ensure your entire foot is flat and avoid keeping just the toes or heels on the edge.

2. Push through your right heel as you straighten your right leg and lift your body onto the platform. The left foot should only assist minimally for balance, not for propulsion.
3. Bring your left foot up to stand fully on the platform with both feet.
4. Step down with your left foot first, followed by the right, in a controlled manner. Avoid dropping down quickly to reduce joint impact.
5. Perform 10 to 12 repetitions on one leg before switching to the other. For increased difficulty, hold dumbbells or a kettlebell.

- **Clamshells**

1. Lie on your side on a firm, comfortable surface (e.g., yoga mat).
2. Bend your knees to a 90-degree angle and stack them on top of each other. Your hips and shoulders should form a straight line. Keep your feet together and in line with your hips.
3. Engage your core muscles to stabilize your trunk and prevent rolling backward.
4. Slowly lift the top knee while keeping your feet together, mimicking the opening of a clamshell. Pause at the top of the movement for one to two seconds to feel the muscle activation.
5. Lower your knee back to the starting position with control. Perform 10 to 15 repetitions per side. For added intensity, place a resistance band just above your knees.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Maintaining Hip and Knee Balance

Q: Why is hip strength important for preventing falls?

A: Hip strength, particularly in the hip abductors, is critical for maintaining balance and preventing falls. Weak hip muscles impair lateral balance control, stepping, obstacle navigation, and overall stability, increasing the risk of falls and injuries.

Q: What are some simple exercises to strengthen hip stabilizers?

A: A recommended exercise is the single-leg squat with a foam roller against a wall, which targets hip stabilizers and knee stability. This exercise should be performed in two sets of 10 to 12 repetitions per leg, two to three times weekly.

Q: How do I know if I'm performing hip-strengthening exercises correctly?

A: Correct performance should produce a deep muscular burn, particularly in the glutes and hip stabilizers. The goal is to maintain control, tension, and alignment, rather than achieving maximum depth or range of motion.

Q: Besides hip exercises, why is it essential to strengthen the knees for balance?

A: Knees, as the largest weight-bearing joints, significantly influence balance. Strengthening knee-supportive muscles also engages hip and glute muscles, thus improving overall stability and reducing the risk of injuries.

Q: What are additional exercises to improve overall hip and knee strength?

A: Additional recommended exercises include hip flexor stretches (half-kneeling, 90/90 stretch, supine, side-lying), and knee-focused exercises like straight leg raises, wall sits, glute bridges, step-ups, and clamshells. These exercises collectively enhance hip stability, knee strength, and overall balance.

Sources and References

- ^{1, 2} Arch Phys Med Rehabil. 2022 Jan 5;103(8):1651–1662
- ³ Fit & Well, June 25, 2025
- ⁴ HSS, “Four Hip Flexor Stretches to Relieve Tightness, from a PT”
- ⁵ Runner’s World, January 11, 2025
- ⁶ Kennedy Brothers Physical Therapy, “Cartilage and the Knee Joint”
- ⁷ Alleviate, “10 Best Knee Strengthening Exercises: A Detailed Guide”