



Building Better Balance:
Get Off the Ball And Move Your Head!

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Balance—everyone needs it. Everyone wants it.

One of the primary goals of modern day “functional training” is to build better balance that you and your clients can use in the real world. We are with you 100%.

Unfortunately, this is one of those places in life where “common sense” often fails...

It is commonly accepted that learning how to balance on something unstable will make us more stable on solid ground. Unfortunately, this is generally not true. Modern physiology and neuroscience both tell us that we improve exactly what we train for. So, training on an unstable surface makes you better at standing on an unstable surface—not a valuable skill for most of our athletes!

Additionally, when you look at how modern, “functional” balance training is typically done there are some major glaring flaws...

Think back to the last time you saw someone standing on a “balance device.” They probably looked a lot like this:



If you look closely at someone training on a balance device you will see **two** vital mistakes:

1. They take on a startle/scared posture the majority of the time—their shoulders are up, head forward, shoulders rounded, spine rounded.
2. To “help” their balance—they fix their eyes on the horizon and **never move their head.**



Why are these two things a problem?

1. We’ve already said—you get what you train for. Standing and training in a startle/scared position emphasizes and reinforces something you are already good at.
2. If you understand **how** “balance” is created in the body you will know that there are three primary systems involved in keeping you upright:
 - a. Your Visual System
 - b. Your Vestibular System
 - c. Your Proprioceptive System

Each of these three systems provides input to the brain regarding our body positioning—when the three systems provide conflicting information, we can have pain and poor performance.

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Which means it’s important that all three systems—and the interactions between them—are trained.

So, while training on an unstable surface may stimulate your proprioceptive system a great deal—never moving your eyes or your head leaves you with deficits in your training for two out of the three systems that keep you upright!

How We Train Balance

The great news is that there are some very easy exercises to incorporate into your training that will help you take advantage of **all systems**.

THE Z-HEALTH BASIC BALANCE TRAINING PROGRESSION

1. Find a firm, solid surface to train on and ensure there is nothing to trip/fall/injure yourself on.
2. Take off your shoes.
3. Standing with **both** feet on the ground and your eyes open, quickly turn your head to the right and maintain your balance for 15 seconds. Repeat this quick turn and balance turning your head left, looking up, looking down, and tilting your head left and right. This **should be incredibly easy**.
4. Next, repeat all the same steps in #3 with **both** feet on the ground and your eyes closed. This should still be **very easy**.
5. Now, we will make it harder. Stand on one leg with your eyes open and repeat all the movements found in #3. While this may still be easy, by the time you are done training on each leg, you will likely be feeling some significant foot and leg fatigue.
6. Finally, it's time for the hard version! You will repeat all the movements found in #3 while standing on one leg with your eyes closed. This is **much harder** than it sounds like it should be. More than 90% of athletes that we test are unable to stay upright for the full 15 seconds in each position when first tested.
7. As you discover your strengths and weaknesses in this series, plug these basic balance training drills into your day. Within 4-6 weeks you **should** notice tremendous improvements in your stable ground balance. If not, give us a call at 1-888-394-4198 so we can direct you in the appropriate direction for more help.



Never moving your eyes or your head leaves you with deficits in your training for two out of the three systems that keep you upright!

About Z-Health Performance Solutions, LLC

Our goal is to help create professionals that are in the top 1% of their respective fields. To find out how to have performance breakthroughs in your very next training session, visit us online at www.zhealth.net

For Further Reading

***Balance: In Search of the
Lost Sense*** by Scott McCredie

***Vestibular Function:
Evaluation and Treatment***
by Alan Desmond

***Vestibular Rehabilitation
Therapy (VRT)***
<http://www.dizziness-and-balance.com/treatment/rehab.html>



GET YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

- ONLINE AT WWW.ZHEALTH.NET
- EMAIL US AT INFO@ZHEALTH.NET
- CALL US TOLL-FREE AT 1-888-394-4198