**Balancing act: add flexibility to your exercise plan**

When you think exercise, you probably picture cardio and strength activities. Yes, these are critical for good health, but so too are balance and flexibility. Here’s why.

**Balance training**

This is exercise that strengthens the muscles that help keep you upright, including your legs and core. When practised regularly, balance training helps you to improve your stability and prevent falls.

TRY THIS NOW: Stand still and lift one leg up. Once you’re comfortable, repeat this with your eyes closed. This is called the ‘Stork Stand’ and how long you can do this for is a direct measure of your balance.

**Flexibility training**

This is stretching and it improves your range and ease of movement around a joint, like your shoulders and knees. Being more flexible has many benefits and gives you more freedom to do daily activities. It also helps reduce your risk of injury and increases muscle blood flow.

TRY THIS NOW: Stand with your feet together and your arms straight over your head. Clasp your hands together, with your fingers interlaced and point your fingers upwards. Slowly bend your upper body to the right. Return to the centre and repeat to the left. This is called a ‘Standing Side Stretch’.

There are a range of fun activities and exercises that incorporate balance and stretching such as tai chi, qigong, yoga, and static stretching. Add these types of movement to your week and you’ll soon feel the benefits.