

# STrength And Balance for Life (STABL) Overview Handout

## Introduction

Welcome to **ST**trength **A**nd **B**alance for **L**ife (STABL)

### **What is it?**

STABL is a set of activity resources. It was created to support your well-being, independence and reduce your risk of falling by improving your strength and balance. STABL includes:

- Strength and balance home activities in 3 levels (sit, stand, move).
- Goal setting information.
- Tracking sheet to record your progress.

### **Why is it important?**

Although they are common, falls are not a normal part of aging, they are preventable. As you age, you can lose strength and your reflexes may slow down, which can make you more likely to fall. One in three older adults living in the community fall every year in B.C., and falls can result in serious injury and loss of independence. The good news is, you can lower your risk of falling by doing activities that improve your strength and balance, such as STABL. The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines recommend that adults do strength activities for all major muscle groups at least 2 times a week. For those 65 and older, daily balance activities are also recommended.

### **How will it help me?**

Other benefits of exercise include improving your function, mood, energy, and memory. This means you may...

- ✓ Be able to do things you enjoy such as being outside with friends or family, playing with your grandchildren, attending a class or event, or other recreational activities.
- ✓ Feel happier and have more energy.
- ✓ Be able to think clearly and remember things like names and appointments.
- ✓ Stay independent longer, such as doing your own household chores, personal care, grocery shopping and continuing to live comfortably in your community.



## Safety

### Is it safe to start exercise?

STABL is designed to be safe and easy to adapt to your abilities- it's designed for everyone. Your body is meant to move regularly but being active has risks and it is your responsibility to make choices that keep you safe. Not moving your body regularly is risky as well. Being inactive is linked to many long-term health conditions and has an increased risk of falls.

There are some reasons you may benefit from a more individualized activity plan or additional guidance before increasing or starting a new activity, such as if:

- You have had a serious medical incident in the past 6 months (for example: surgery, heart attack, loss of consciousness).
- You have shortness of breath at rest or dizziness during activity.
- You have spinal or compression fractures or bone lesions.

If any of these are true for you or if you aren't sure if it is safe for you to start exercising, contact a health professional such as a doctor. You can also call HealthLink BC to speak with a qualified exercise professional for free. Dial 811 (or 711 for the hard of hearing) between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM Pacific Time, Monday to Friday. The STABL resources do not replace medical advice.

### Exercising with a Health Condition or Symptoms

Most older adults have at least one long-term health condition. You can still safely exercise if you have a health condition. In fact, exercise can often help manage your condition, but be sure to follow these safety suggestions. If you...

- Have diabetes: manage your blood sugar, avoiding symptoms like dizziness.
- Have muscle spasms or weakness (for example due to Parkinson's): always do standing and walking activities beside a counter.
- Experience shortness of breath (for example, as a symptom of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or asthma): take breaks between activities or do small amounts of each activity more frequently, so you do not make your symptoms worse.
- Have dizziness spells or vertigo: go slow and always do the standing and walking activities beside a counter.
- Have numbness or tingling in your feet: always do the standing and walking exercises beside a counter.
- Have high or low blood pressure: change positions slowly to give your body time to adjust.
- Have difficulty with memory or doing complex tasks: always do the standing activities with a helper and beside a counter.

## **Choosing a STABL Level: Sit, Stand or Move?**

### **Where to start?**

Exercises from each level will result in many health benefits to you. Answer the questions below to help you decide the best, most comfortable and safe level for you right now.

**Question 1.** Do you use a wheelchair for most of your daily activities?

- Yes → start with Level 1: Sit.
- No → go to the next question

**Question 2.** Do you need to hold onto a sturdy surface or other mobility support to stand for 30 seconds?

- Yes → start with Level 1: Sit.
- No → go to the next question

**Question 3.** Can you walk to the other end of the room and back with or without support (including a cane or walker)?

- No → start with Level 1: Sit. (If these are too easy, try some Level 2 activities)
- Yes → start with Level 2: Stand.

**None of the questions above suggest I start in Level 3: Move. Why?**

- Level 3 is more complex and requires standing and moving activities with minimal hand support on sturdy surfaces. Once you can complete all the activities in the Level 2 without holding onto a counter or mobility aid, then it is likely safe for you to move on to Level 3.

If you are still not sure what level of activities to start with you can call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

## **Additional Resources**

For more information and resources on preventing falls you can look at B.C.'s fall and injury prevention website, Finding Balance BC. On this site you will find videos of the STABL activities in all 3 levels.

### **Finding Balance BC**

Website: <https://findingbalancebc.ca/>

To speak to a qualified exercise professional, you can contact HealthLink BC.

### **HealthLink BC**

**Phone:** Dial 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing) between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM Pacific Time, Monday to Friday.

**Email:** [Email a Qualified Exercise Professional | HealthLink BC](#)

**Website:** [Physical Activity Services | HealthLink BC](#)

### **Other fall prevention resources:**

- HealthLink BC webpage on preventing falls: [Preventing Falls | HealthLink BC](#)
- BC Government webpage on fall prevention: [Fall Prevention - Province of British Columbia](#)
- Active Aging Network resource: [Exercise is one of the keys to preventing falls.pdf](#)
- Osteoporosis Canada: <https://osteoporosis.ca/>
- Arthritis Society: <https://arthritis.ca/>
- Exercise Is Medicine: [Physical Activity for Older Adults 2021.pdf](#)
- Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines: [Adults 65+ 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#)

