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Standing on one leg can tell us about our age – 31st October 2024

Level 0

Scientists have found we can measure someone's age by getting them to stand on one leg. This shows how well a person can balance, and balance is more difficult as we get older. Balance needs input from vision, hearing and other senses. Good balance means we have a better quality of life.

Researchers tested the balance of people over the age of 50. Each person had to balance for 30 seconds. They did this with their eyes both closed and open. People who stood on their weaker leg showed more about ageing. Researchers said balance was a sign of health. It showed how the body's systems work well together.

Level 1

We count the rings on a tree to find its age. Scientists have now found we can measure the age of people by getting them to stand on one leg. This shows how well a person can balance, and balance becomes more difficult as we get older. A researcher said balance was important because it requires input from vision, hearing and other senses. He said: "Good balance...leads to improved quality of life and healthy ageing."

Researchers tested the balance of people over the age of 50. Each person had to balance on their stronger and weaker leg for 30 seconds. They did this with their eyes both closed and open. People who stood on their weaker leg showed the highest rate of decline with age. The rate for the weaker leg was half a second higher per decade. The researchers said balance was a sign of health because "it reflects how the body's systems are working together".

Level 2

We can count the number of rings on a tree to find its age. Scientists have now found we can measure the age of people by getting them to stand on one leg. Dr Kenton Kaufman said standing on one leg shows how well a person can balance, and balance becomes more difficult as we age. He said balance was important because, "it requires input from vision, the [hearing] system, and the [senses]". He added: "Good balance provides the ability to carry out activities of daily living without the fear of falling, and this leads to improved quality of life and healthy ageing."

Researchers tested forty people over the age of 50. They did tests for walking and balance. Each participant had to balance on their dominant and non-dominant leg for 30 seconds. They did this with their eyes closed, and with their eyes open. Kaufman found that standing on the non-dominant leg showed the highest rate of decline with age. The rate for the non-dominant leg was half a second higher per decade. Kaufman concluded: "Standing on one leg is a good measure of your overall health because balance reflects how the body's systems are working together."

Level 3

Everyone knows how to find the age of a fallen tree. We count the number of rings on the tree's stump. A scientist has found a new way to measure the age of people – get them to stand on one leg. Dr Kenton Kaufman from the Mayo Clinic in the USA said standing on one leg shows how well a person can balance. He said balance becomes more difficult as we age. Dr Kaufman added: "Balance is an important measure because, in addition to muscle strength, it requires input from vision, the [hearing] system, and the [senses]." He added: "Good balance provides the ability to carry out activities of daily living without the fear of falling, and this leads to improved quality of life and healthy ageing."

Forty people over the age of 50 took part in the research. They did tests for walking, balance, grip, and knee strength. Each participant had to balance on their dominant and non-dominant leg for 30 seconds. They did this with their eyes closed, and again with their eyes open. Kaufman found that standing on the non-dominant leg showed the highest rate of decline with age. There was a 2.2-second-per-decade decline when participants stood on their non-dominant leg. This compared to 1.7 seconds for the dominant leg. Kaufman concluded: "Standing on one leg is a good measure of your overall health because balance reflects how the body's systems are working together."