



by Director of Fitness: Robin Weiss

Exercising with a Stability Ball

Not long ago, exercises with a stability ball were referred to as a “fitness trend” that involved balancing oneself on an oversized ball while performing functional resistance movements. The ball was (and still is) often referred to as a "physio" or "Swiss" ball and was a major tool for numerous performance enhancement specialists. Now, it's a mainstream piece of fitness equipment.

Traditional resistance training involves working a single joint in a single plane of motion (e.g., bicep curls). This type of training does a poor job of preparing us for the dynamic movements in sports and day-to-day activities. Integrated training on a stability ball facilitates multi-planar neuromuscular control that is more specific to athletic activities and day-to-day movements. Just what exactly does that mean? Well, it's a fancy way of saying that exercising with a stability ball is good for us!

Muscle control and joint stability are extremely important because a tremendous amount of stress is placed on the human body during everyday functional activities. A perfect example of this is carrying a box down a flight of stairs. The lumbar spine (lower back) must stabilize the simultaneous contraction of the muscles of the lower body (e.g., quadriceps, hamstrings) that are needed to descend the stairs, and the muscles of the arms and shoulders (e.g., biceps, deltoids) that are needed to carry the box. In addition to stabilization, the entire spine must be balanced while stepping down. The one step at a time movement is basically a single leg balancing activity.

Training on the stability ball is excellent for strengthening our core muscle areas (abdominal, back). A strong core stabilizes our spine as we move. Stability ball workouts also teach and improve posture, balance, coordination, and flexibility. Attention to these areas can prevent low back pain as well as improve our dynamic balance.

Reference: SparkPeople.com 2008