

## Sitting Balance Scale

### Equipment:

Stopwatch, 2 lb. cuff weight, pen, 12 inch ruler, slipper, Physician Desk Reference (PDR) or other stable object 3 to 3.5 inches in height, clipboard, 15"x15"x15" foam

### Purpose:

11 item ordinal scale test used to assess individuals who are primarily non ambulatory. Able to be used for a variety of conditions, including those who are frail and have chronic conditions.

### Procedures:

1. All sitting items are performed with the patient sitting unsupported on a firm surface with both feet in weight bearing position unless otherwise indicated.
2. Individual gets one attempt at each task
3. Document each task and give instructions as written  
If Individual cannot achieve the higher level completely, they are scored the lower level score
4. In most cases to achieve each level, the individual will need to hold the position for a specific amount of time
5. Deductions are given if:  
Time or movement required is not met  
Performance requires supervision  
Individual touches an external object or requires assistance from examiner
6. Individuals should be told to try to maintain their balance while attempting each task

### Scoring:

5 point ordinal scale, range 0-4.

0 indicates the lowest level of function and 4 the highest level function

Total score possible: 44

### Interpretation:

43.17/44 healthy community dwelling older adults

34.41/44 those with pathologies requiring home health or nursing home residents.

*Medley, A., & Thompson, M. (2011). Development, reliability and validity of the Sitting Balance Scale. Physiotherapy Theory Practice, 27(7), 471-481*

## Sitting Balance Scale

Identify if the individual is sitting in:

Folding chair \_\_\_\_\_ Wheelchair \_\_\_\_\_ Therapy mat \_\_\_\_\_ Bed \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

1. SITTING UNSUPPORTED (EYES OPEN)

Instructions: Sit with eyes open and arms folded on lap, feet flat on the floor for 60 seconds.

Back must not be leaning into a support surface

- ( ) 4 Able to sit safely and securely for 60 seconds
- ( ) 3 Able to sit for 60 seconds but requires supervision
- ( ) 2 Able to sit for 30 seconds
- ( ) 1 Able to sit for 10 seconds
- ( ) 0 Unable to sit unsupported for 10 seconds

2. SITTING UNSUPPORTED WITH EYES CLOSED

Instructions: Sit with eyes closed for 30 seconds, with feet flat on the floor

- ( ) 4 Able to sit safely and securely for 30 seconds
- ( ) 3 Able to sit for 30 seconds but requires supervision
- ( ) 2 Able to sit for 10 seconds
- ( ) 1 Able to sit for 3 seconds
- ( ) 0 Unable to sit unsupported for 3 seconds

3. SITTING UNSUPPORTED WITH ARMS AS LEVERS

Instructions: Start with both hands in their lap. Have them cross their arms across their chest. If they can do this, have them lift the arm of their choice (if hemiplegia use unaffected side) in front of them to 90 degree shoulder flexion, keeping elbow straight. If they can do this, have them lift the 2 lb weight. Score accordingly

- ( ) 4 Able to maintain sit while lifting the 2 lb weight to 90 degrees of shoulder flexion
- ( ) 3 Able to maintain sit and lift arm up to 90 degrees of shoulder flexion without the weight
- ( ) 2 Able to maintain sit with arms folded across the chest
- ( ) 1 Able to maintain sit with hands folded in their lap
- ( ) 0 Able to sit with hands at side of them on the support surface

4. REACHING FORWARD WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARM WHILE SITTING

Instructions: Have them make a fist and reach forward with extended arm to 90 degrees of shoulder flexion. Place the ruler at the end of the fist and hold a pen at the 12" level from the fist. Ask the patient to touch the pen with the knuckles of the fist. Score accordingly

- ( ) 4 Can reach forward without loss of balance > 10"
- ( ) 3 Can reach forward without loss of balance >5"
- ( ) 2 Can reach forward without loss of balance >2"
- ( ) 1 Reaches forward but needs supervision
- ( ) 0 Loses balance while trying/requires external support

5. PICK UP AN OBJECT FROM THE FLOOR WHILE SITTING UNSUPPORTED  
 Instructions: Place a slipper 3" in front of the patient's toes and ask them to pick up the slipper  
 4 Able to pick up the slipper without losing balance  
 3 Able to pick up the slipper but requires supervision for balance  
 2 Unable to pick up slipper but reaches 1-2" from slipper and keeps balance independently  
 1 Unable to pick up and needs supervision while trying  
 0 Unable to try/needs assistance to keep from losing balance or falling
6. PLACING ALTERNATE FOOT ON BOOK OR OBJECT 3-3.5" IN HEIGHT  
 Instructions: Place a PDR or other item 3-3.5" high 6" in front of the patient's toes. Have the patient to alternately touch feet to the top of the PDR or object for a total of 4 times with each foot. (Patients with hemiplegia or unilateral amputation may perform the task with their uninvolved leg)  
 4 Able to sit independently and safely complete 8 steps in 20 seconds  
 (4 with each or 8 with unilateral)  
 3 Able to sit independently and complete 8 steps > 20 seconds  
 (4 with each or 8 with unilateral)  
 2 Able to complete 4 steps without aid but with supervision  
 (2 with each or 4 with unilateral)  
 1 Able to complete > 2 steps with minimal assistance  
 0 Unable to try/needs assistance to keep from falling if tries
7. REACHING LATERALLY WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARM WHILE SITTING UNSUPPORTED  
 Instructions: Ask the patient to make a fist and reach arm of choice out to the side (laterally to 90 degrees of shoulder abduction) keeping arm extended. Hold ruler at the level of the fist and hold the pen at the 12" distance from fist. Ask the patient to try to touch the pen with their fist. Measure distance reached  
 4 Can reach laterally without loss of balance > 10"  
 3 Can reach laterally without loss of balance >5"  
 2 Can reach laterally without loss of balance >2"  
 1 Reaches laterally but needs supervision  
 0 Loses balance while trying/requires external support
8. TURNING TO LOOK BEHIND OVER LEFT AND RIGHT SHOULDER WHILE SITTING  
 Instructions: Patient begins with hands in the lap. Examiner identifies an object behind the patient. Have the patient look directly behind them over their right shoulder then left to look at the object.  
 4 Looks behind them from both sides while shifting weight appropriately  
 3 Looks behind them one side only with other side showing less weight shift  
 2 Turns sideways only but maintains balance  
 1 Needs supervision while turning  
 0 Needs assist to keep from losing balance or falling

9. LATERAL BEND TO ELBOW IN SITTING

Instructions: Place a clipboard at the level with the sitting surface. Have the patient bend sideways to have left elbow touch the clipboard and return to upright. Repeat on the other side.

- 4 Able to smoothly perform the motion bilaterally and return to upright position
- 3 Able to perform 2/3 of the motion or difficulty returning to upright on one or both sides
- 2 Able to perform 1/3 of the motion or only able to perform unilaterally
- 1 Initiates the motion but requires assistance to move further
- 0 Unable to complete motion

10. SIT TO STAND TRANSFERS

Instructions: Ask the patient to stand up and try not to use hands for support

- 4 Able to transfer safely with the minor use of hands
- 3 Able to transfer safely with verbal cuing and/or supervision
- 2 Able to transfer with assistance x 1
- 1 Able to transfer with assistance x 2
- 0 Unable to transfer or needs a lift

11. PICK UP AN OBJECT FROM THE FLOOR WHILE SITTING UNSUPPORTED ON FOAM

Instructions: Foam should be 15x15x15" and a density that challenges the patient and does not compress all the way to the chair seat. Feet need to remain flat on floor when sitting on the foam. Place a slipper 3" in front of the patient's toes and ask them to pick up the slipper

- 4 Able to pick up the slipper without losing balance
- 3 Able to pick up the slipper but requires supervision for balance
- 2 Unable to pick up slipper but reaches 1-2" from slipper and keeps balance independently
- 1 Unable to pick up and needs supervision while trying
- 0 Unable to try/needs assistance to keep from losing balance or falling

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_/44