



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance specialists at Veritas Risk Services

The stability ball was developed in Italy in the 1960s. They were first used in rehabilitative therapy in Switzerland. The balls were introduced in the United States in 1989.

FITNESS EQUIPMENT: STABILITY BALLS

Stability balls are an inexpensive, low-tech, lightweight and fun means of improving core stability, strength, endurance, balance and flexibility.

Stability balls can help you improve your fitness, because they allow for a variety of exercises. They also work your core muscles, including your abdominals, back muscles and hip flexors. Because the ball is unstable, these muscles are actively engaged throughout each exercise.

Selecting a Stability Ball

Stability balls range from small to extra-extra-large. Choose a size that allows you to sit on it with erect posture and your hips and knees placed at 90-degree angles.

A smaller ball may be more useful as a handheld object for sitting or standing range-of-motion and balance exercises. It can also be used to perform crunches with the ball between or behind the knees.

Safety

To increase your safety while using a stability ball:

- Maintain the natural curves of your back while exercising.
- Increase your stability by placing your feet shoulder-width apart, or wider for better balance.
- Place chairs on either side of the ball to provide lateral stability while exercising in a seated position.
- Always use good movement technique and control.
- Remember to breathe throughout each exercise.
- Put a mat in front of the ball to act as a cushion in case of a fall.

- Use a wall behind the ball to keep it from rolling backward from underneath you, and to prevent you from falling directly to the floor should the ball slip forward.
- Avoid bouncing or fast movements on the stability ball, because they reduce your control and increase the risk of strains and sprains.

In addition, it is important to follow a proper exercise progression to reduce your risk of injury and gain optimal training benefits. Begin by developing the ability to maintain your balance while sitting on the ball before adding arm, leg or torso movement or external resistance with items like free weights.