

# Sitting Balance Scale

**Patient's full name:**

**Date assessed:**

**Assessor's full name:**

**What you need:** Stopwatch, 2 lb. cuff weight, Pen, 12-inch ruler, Slipper, Physician Desk Reference (PDR) or other stable objects 3 to 3.5 inches in height, Clipboard, 15"x15"x15" foam

## Procedure:

- Each activity will be performed by the patient while seated without support on a firm, sturdy surface while their feet are in a weight-bearing position unless otherwise specified on the sheet.
- Your patient only gets one attempt for each activity.
- Make sure to instruct your patients for each activity.
- Document each activity.
- Score according to the prompts for each activity. If the patient falls short of achieving a certain objective, score them accordingly. For example, to score a 3 or 4, the patient must sit with their eyes closed for 30 seconds. They get a 3 if they are supervised or required support, or 4 if unsupervised. If they fail and only get 27 seconds, you score them a 2. Prompts vary per item, so follow their respective prompts.
- For each activity, you need to remind the patient to maintain their balance

## Identify if the individual is sitting in:

<input type="checkbox"/> Folding Chair	<input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair	<input type="checkbox"/> Therapy mat	<input type="checkbox"/> Bed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
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### 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 the arm of choice out to the side (laterally to 90 degrees of shoulder abduction) keeping the arm extended. Hold the ruler at the level of the fist and hold the pen at the 12" distance from the 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 the other side showing less weight shift
- 2 Turns sideways only but maintains balance

- 1 Needs supervision while turning
- 0 Needs assistance 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 the 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 cueing 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 have a density that challenges the patient and does not compress all the way to the chair seat. Feet need to remain flat on the 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

**Reference:**

Medley, A., & Thompson, M. (2011). *Development, reliability and validity of the Sitting Balance Scale. Physiotherapy Theory Practice, 27 (2), 471-481.*