

# Penguins may teach humans about balance

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Dozens of teeter-tottering penguins are the subject of a study by a Texas researcher investigating balance and locomotion.

Max Kurz of the University of Houston says the study may help the elderly and other people with walking challenges.

"Compared to other terrestrial animals, penguins have an excessive amount of side-to-side, waddling motion," said Kurz. "If humans waddle too much they fall, but penguins somehow overcome this. They may have an elegant movement strategy for stability that we're unaware of."

Kurz says learning about the penguin's distinctive waddle may help those with walking challenges or even allow the development of more mobile robots, the university reported.

Kurz believes the penguins have learned to use the waddling motion in a way that makes their movements more efficient, adjusting for the limitations of the size of their legs and their weight.

Humans, on the other hand, have not developed a mechanism to adjust for such dramatic side-to-side motion.

"We can envision a scenario where elderly may be able to put their walkers or canes down because they've learned to make the same adjustments in their walking patterns," Kurz said.

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