



Fall Prevention with Physical Therapy

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Do you have a fear of falling or have you suffered a fall? Do you feel your balance is poor and feel unsteady on your feet? Unfortunately suffering a fall is a common occurrence as individual's age. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) approximately 35% of adults over the age of 65 fall each year and that number increases to 50% in adults over age 70. The CDC reports 1 in 5 falls result in injury. Each year 2.8 million older adults are treated in emergency departments for fall injuries. The CDC reports most fractures among older adults are caused by falls. The most common fractures suffered during falls are of the spine, hip, ankle, arm and hand. Falls are also the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries. Falls can lead to immediate injuries and also decreased long-term function. Many people who suffer a fall never return to their prior level of function and independence. After a fall many people become afraid of falling again. This fear can cause a person to not go out as much and decrease their everyday activities. They become less active, and therefore they become weaker which increases their chances of falling.

Research has shown there are multiple factors that increase an individual's risk for falling. The more risk factors you have the greater your chances of falling. The best way to avoid falling is being proactive to eliminate risk factors. You can make many quick changes to reduce your risk of falling. Most falls occur in the home so the first step to reduce your risk of falls is to assess the safety of your home. Removing tripping hazards such as throw rugs and making sure you have adequate lighting in all areas of your home are two easy ways to make your home safer. Research also shows taking multiple medications increases your risk of falling. Many drugs have the side effect of dizziness which can lead to a fall.

Talking to your doctor and pharmacist regularly about your medications and any side effects you may be experiencing can reduce your fall risk. As we get older we rely more on our vision for balance. Therefore, another easy step to reduce your risk of falls is getting an annual eye exam and update your eyeglasses if needed.

Many individuals believe poor balance and falling are just a part of getting older. Did you know you can improve your balance and decrease your risk of falling by going to Physical Therapy? Research shows working on flexibility, strength, and balance exercises will improve a person's balance and reduce their risk of falling. Physical therapists are movement experts and through a thorough examination looking at how you walk, your range of motion, strength, and your balance can determine why you are at a high risk of falling. The therapist will perform objective strength and balance test that will be re-tested near the end of your care that will show how much your strength and balance have improved. The therapist will provide you with *individualized* exercises you can do at home to reduce your risk of falling. Genesee Valley Physical Therapy guarantees you will FALL in love with therapy when you see your balance improve.

