

HOW CAN A PHYSICAL THERAPIST HELP?

A physical therapist can evaluate your posture, your strength, your endurance and your ability to move your joints and then develop a program that is appropriate for you.

A physical therapist can develop an exercise program that is appropriate for your condition.



A physical therapist can answer your questions or refer you to other professionals if necessary.

APTA has an online database of Physical Therapists where you can search for a PT near you. Visit www.apta.org/findapt. You may want to try to find someone with a practice focus in geriatrics, or who is a Geriatric Certified Specialist (GCS). If you do not use the internet, call 800/999-APTA for assistance.

References:

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/adultfalls.htm>



This brochure was developed by the Section on Geriatrics of the American Physical Therapy Association.

The Section on Geriatrics is a section of the of the American Physical Therapy Association with 4,800 members. Members are dedicated to respect the uniqueness of aging adults through compassion, caring, commitment and excellence in the provision of services.

More Section on Geriatrics consumer information is available at:
www.geriaticsspt.org

American Physical Therapy Association
1-800-999-APTA

APTA consumer information:
www.apta.org

Find a Physical Therapist near you:
www.apta.org/findapt



Balance
and
Falls

The problem of falls...

Falls are a leading cause of death from injury in elderly persons

The risk of falling increases with advancing age:

- 30% of people over the age of 65 fall every year and about 50% of people over the age of 80 fall yearly.
- Falls are a major source of disability through fractures, activity restriction, and fear

Normal Aging

Our bodies change in many ways as we grow older. For example...

- Less muscle mass and power in hips and legs
- Less ability to move joints of ankles, knees and hips
- Slower reflexes and increased reaction time
- Vision is less acute
- Less ability to sense changes in floor surface through your feet
- Slower walking speed with shorter and more narrow steps

WHAT is BALANCE?

Balance is the ability to maintain your body's position as you move

It involves the coordination of three systems of your body:

- **Your vision**
- **Your ability to sense the ground with your feet**
- **Your inner ear (or vestibular system)**

BALANCE IS A SKILL—YOU KEEP IT, RE-LEARN IT BY PRACTICING IT!
If you don't use it, you will lose it!



Why is this important?

Falling is not a normal part of aging!

Falling can be a sign of an underlying condition or disease.

That is why it is important to figure out why a fall happens...

What you can do to prevent falls'...

1. **Exercise Daily:** You are NEVER too old to begin an exercise program. Consult a Physical Therapist to find the most appropriate type of activity is best for you!
2. **Review your medicines** (prescription and OTC) with every health care provider at every visit. Use the same pharmacist for all your prescriptions and let the pharmacist know if you cannot afford your medications.
3. **Have your vision checked annually.** Optimizing your vision allows you to see obstacles and read medication labels.
4. **Make your home safer:** Remove obstacle, clutter and throw rugs, install grab bars and hand rails.

