

STAYING ON YOUR FEET

How to keep your balance and prevent falls

Falls can diminish your ability to lead an active and independent life. 75% of Americans over the age of 70 are diagnosed as having “abnormal balance” and about one-third of people over the age of 65 will fall at least once this year. Age may be a risk factor for falls; however, falling and fear of falling should not be accepted as a “normal” process of aging. **The causes of falls can be found and addressed, often by your physical therapist.**

Balance & Aging

Although a person’s balance may be fine when they are standing still, balance problems may become apparent when the person is moving about or trying to do more than one thing at a time (e.g. walking while turning the head to talk to another person). Such problems can make you fearful of performing simple daily activities. As a result, you may avoid certain tasks or strenuous and challenging activities, causing you to lose muscle strength and flexibility.

There are many interacting factors which can increase your fall risk:



Physical Therapy & Fall Prevention

Physical therapists develop individualized plans to help improve strength, stability, and mobility. They can help reduce your risk of falling by helping make your home safe, assessing your personal risk factors, and designing exercise and balance training programs.

The home is the primary location for falls. Unsafe conditions may include clutter on the floors or stairs, throw rugs in the walkways, electrical cords in the walkways, inadequate lighting, unstable stools/chairs, or hazardous steps/stairs. Your physical therapist can suggest certain adjustments that can be made throughout your living space to make it as safe as possible. By clearing unnecessary clutter and securing rugs and electrical cords, you can remove hazards that often cause you to trip and lose your balance. Sturdy railings can also be installed to make stairs and bathrooms less hazardous.

Your physical therapist will also assess your individual fall risk, asking questions such as:

- Do you have difficulty with walking?
- Do you feel that you are unbalanced?
- What medications are you currently taking?
- How many times have you fallen?
- Have you fallen in the last year?
- What was the cause of your falls?
- Did you sustain any injuries as a result of your fall?

Did you know that medications such as those prescribed to treat high blood pressure can increase your risk of falling?

Your Personal Program

Age may be a risk factor for falls, but falling and poor balance do not have to be accepted as consequences of aging. After assessing your individual risk and history of falls and/or balance problems, your physical therapist will develop a personalized program based on your specific needs. Each person has different factors that can affect their balance. **To assess your fall risk, you should see a physical therapist for a Fall Risk Assessment.**

**Improve Your Balance
Prevent Falls**

Do you or someone you know have poor balance? Do you avoid traveling or going outside during the winter months because you are afraid of falling and getting injured?

We are offering FREE 15-minute Fall Risk Assessments in the months of December and January to determine if physical therapy is right for you!

Call us to schedule yours today!

Broken Bow: (308) 872-5800