



NEW LIFE PHYSICAL THERAPY AND SPORTS MEDICINE

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Functional Balance Disorders

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Functional balance disorders occur so frequently in senior populations that they are often overlooked and casually accepted as a normal process of aging.

But did you know that:

- Falls are the leading cause of injury related deaths and of traumatic brain injuries in seniors.
- Balance-related falls account for more than half of accidental deaths in seniors. (Murphy 2000)
- One third of adults aged 65+ fall each year; of those that fall, 20-30% suffer moderate to severe injuries that reduce mobility, independence & increase the risk of premature death. (Hornbrook 1994; Hausdorff 2001)
- Seniors are hospitalized for fall-related injuries five times more often than they are for injuries from other causes and these injuries account for 40% of nursing home admissions. (Alexander 1992)
- The total cost of fall related injuries for seniors in 1994 was \$27.3

billion and by 2020, it is expected to reach \$43.8 billion. (Englander 1996)

- One half to two thirds of injuries due to falls occur at home, while research confirms that simply modifying one's home alone, **does not** reduce falls. (CDC 2003)

Functional exercise training is effective in reducing fall related behavior in patients with a history of falls.

Hauer et al, performed a study to determine the efficacy and safety of exercise in reducing falls in geriatric patients. The intervention group received physical therapy with a focus on strength, balance and functional gait compared to another group which received therapy exclusive of these components.

At a 3 month follow-up, improvements in the intervention group of increased strength, balance and functional motor performance persisted compared to the control group whom showed no improvements during or at follow-up. Fall incidence was reduced by 25%.

Another study by Faber et al showed a total number of falls in the intervention group at a 20-month follow-up was 6 in the intervention group compared to 17 in the control group.

The authors of this study also used exercise focused on strength, balance and walking ability. The results of this study showed both short and long-term benefits in improving health and quality of life in the elderly.

These studies support the use of functional balance and strengthening to prevent future injuries from falls and the costs associated; both the patients independence and health.

Hauer K, et al. Exercise Training for rehabilitation and secondary prevention of falls in geriatric patients with a history of falls. J Am Geriatr Soc. 2001 Jan;49(1):10-20.

Suzuki et al. Randomized controlled trial of exercise intervention for the prevention of falls in community-dwelling elderly Japanese women. J Bone Miner Metab. 2004;22(6):602-11.

FREE BALANCE & FALL SCREEN

October is National Physical Therapy month!

New Life Physical Therapy & Sports Medicine is holding FREE balance and risk of falling assessments. The FREE assessments will be held on Tuesday, October 31st. If you know of anyone that would benefit from this assessment, please call 742-9356 to schedule a screening.

Included in the assessment will be measurable objective falls tests, as well as identification of fall risk factors which may include loss of tri-plane flexibility, poor proprioceptive input, and decreased muscle recruitment.

We are pleased to offer these FREE screenings in honor of National Physical Therapy Month.



Tuesday, October 31