

# REHAB NEWS



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## PREVENTING FALLS AMONG OLDER ADULTS

Balance is defined as the ability to maintain your center of gravity over your base of support (your feet). Poor balance can result in an unwanted movement, like a misstep, a wobble or tripping. Falling down is the ultimate loss of balance and the leading cause of debilitating injury and premature death in older adults. Each year 1 in 3 older adults will experience a fall; which is why it is vitally important to pay attention to your body to stay on top of your balance.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), older adults can remain independent and reduce their risk of falling by taking these precautions:

- **Exercise regularly.** It is important that the exercises focus on increasing leg strength and improving balance, and that they get more challenging over time.
- **Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medications** to identify medicines that may cause side effects or interactions such as dizziness or drowsiness.
- **Get your eyes checked** at least once a year and update eyeglasses to maximize your vision. Consider getting a pair with single vision distance lenses for some activities such as walking outside.
- **Home Safety** - reduce tripping hazards, add grab bars inside and outside the bath tub and next to the toilet, add stair railings and improve lighting to reduce glare and shadows.

### Therapy Can Help Reduce Falls & Improve Balance

Maintaining proper balance and sense of body position is critical to preventing falls. A physical therapist works with individuals to identify risk factors and designs an individualized program of exercises and activities with an emphasis on strength, flexibility, and proper gait. Balance may be improved with exercises that strengthen the core, back, ankle, knee, and hip muscles along with exercises that improve the function of the balance system. Occupational therapists work with you to discuss changes and modifications that can be made around your home to help prevent falls from occurring. If you have concerns about your balance, call your doctor. Ask your doctor if you could benefit from therapy.