

Fall Prevention Check List:

Do you have a clear path to walk around in your home, or do you have to walk around objects/furniture?

Do you have throw rugs or runners on the floor?

Are there wires across the floor or in the doorways from the TV, cable, phone or other appliances?

Do you store items on the stairway such as clothes, shoes or other objects?

Do you have lighting above any stairs?

Do you have handrails at all stairs?

Are the things you use most often in the kitchen/bathroom/pantry on high shelves?

Are there grab bars in the shower/bathroom?

Is there a light near your bed?

Do you exercise, go for walks or have hobbies that involve being physically active?

Have you had your doctor or pharmacist review your list of medications in the past year?

In the past year have you had:

A vision check?

Blood pressure check?

Sensation and circulation in your feet / legs checked?

Do you ever hold onto furniture or walls when you walk?

Do you ever feel like you may need a cane or other assistance when you walk?

If you have a cane how often do you use it, and does it seem to help?

Have you fallen before? If so, what caused the fall?

Not having clear paths in the home, adequate lighting or hand rails can all lead to increased risk of falling. Medical factors that may increase an individual's risk of falling include medications, blood pressure, strength, sensation in the legs, and vision.

DO YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE BALANCE PROBLEMS?

How can a physical therapist help?

Reviewing your medical history

Checking the strength of your muscles

Observing how you perform certain activities such as climbing steps, and going from sit to stand

Checking the sensation and circulation in your feet and legs, this is particularly important for diabetics

Checking your vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate and respiratory rate), at baseline as well as during and after activity

Examining your balance sitting, standing, walking and performing other activities

Assessing any possible needs for an assistive device (such as a cane or walker), instructing on the proper fit and use of the equipment

Making recommendations for equipment or adaptations that can be made in the home to increase safety

Providing safe exercises that can be done in the clinic or at home to strengthen muscles and improve balance and walking

Consulting with your physician about any findings/recommendations

If you are concerned about your risk of falling, or a decline in strength or balance you need to obtain a referral for physical therapy from your doctor.

Tips for your initial therapy visit:

Be sure to bring a list of your medications and dosage.

You will be asked for a detailed medical history including previous surgeries, illness and hospitalization.

If you are using a cane, walker or wheelchair you should bring it to this visit.

If you have any specific exercise program that you participate in, or have used previously please mention this. The therapist may also ask you about any equipment you may have such as treadmills, weights or an exercise bike, in order to make the best recommendations for you.

The therapist may test several things on this visit including vitals, muscle strength, sensation, balance, walking, and the ability to perform certain tasks. There are many different ways to accomplish these tests, but most involve active participation on the patient's behalf. It is a good idea to wear comfortable, loose clothing and tennis shoes.

General Safety Tips:

Remove throw rugs and runners

Tape down loose wires and rolled up/frayed carpet edges

Change burnt out light bulbs

Install handrails at stairways

Put non slip adhesives in shower/tub

Install grab bars in shower and near toilet

Make sure there is a light close enough to turn on from your bed

Put frequently used items on low shelves

Buy a safe step stool; do not stand on random furniture/objects

Do not store objects on floor, in hallway, or on stairs

Get help re-arranging furniture to make paths

Get help for chores that involve climbing

Keep a phone in as many rooms as possible (especially kitchen and bathroom), or carry a cordless or cell with you. The phones should be able to be reached from the ground

Report falls to your doctor or therapist, any fall!

Have regular check -ups with your doctor

Stay active!

