



Winter, 2011

Message from Cathy

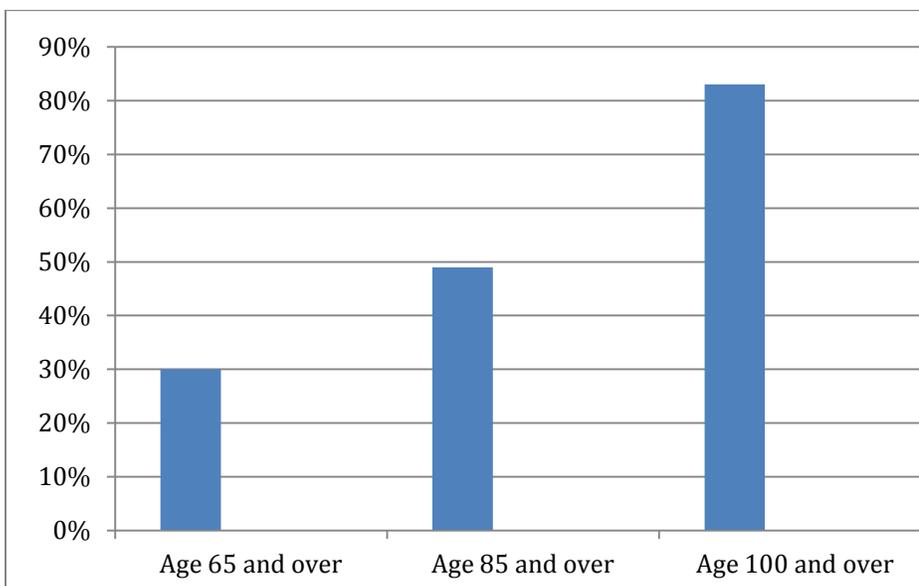
Unintentional falls for people 65 and older are responsible for more than 18,000 deaths and nearly 450,000 hospitalizations annually in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This is a statistic that we need to take very seriously, especially when we have conditions that make falls prevalent, such as ice and snow.

Today's newsletter will focus on why our balance declines with age, and very practical things that we can do to help minimize these natural changes. We hope that you find this information useful and will put you on the right track for a healthy and injury free 2011!

On a personal note, I want to let you know that we just celebrated 23 years of serving the Cincinnati community. I feel blessed and honored that we have been able to provide a higher standard of care for physical therapy services for all of these years. Thank you to all of you for your support in making this possible.

Cathy Guenther PT, President

Fall facts: Risk of falls with age



THE GOOD NEWS: evidence clearly shows that strength and balance training can reduce the rate of falls by about 50%!!!



Why does balance decline with age?

There are many factors that impact our balance that can change over our lifetime. These include the vestibular system of the inner ear, vision, proprioception, (the ability to sense where your body is in space) and your strength and flexibility. All of these systems naturally decline with age, particularly in our seventies and eighties.

Many natural disease processes, such as peripheral neuropathy, stroke, fibromyalgia, Meiner's disease, vertigo, drug interactions, orthostatic hypotension (causing light-headedness), diabetic retinopathy, and cataracts can significantly impact our balance. While we may not be able to do anything about the disease process itself, we can impact our body's response through proper training. **This is the good news: our balance and coordination can be improved, no matter what problem we may be facing.**

The fear of falling can lead to changes in walking. When we are afraid, we unconsciously change our walking pattern to attempt to avoid falls. We begin to slow, down, widen and shorten our steps, take uneven steps, and hold on to furniture and walls more. **If you recognize these patterns in your walking, you may be a perfect candidate to work on your balance.**

***CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IS YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE CAUSE OF YOUR PROBLEM

How do I know if I am having a problem?

- Frequent falls-a fall within the past six months is the single most predictive factor of a future fall.
- Difficulty getting up and down from a chair or bed
- Using furniture, walls etc to keep from falling
- Fear while walking or standing
- Concern by family members and suggestions that you might need a walker or cane.





How do professionals determine if we have balance problems?

There are numerous ways to measure an individual's balance and coordination. First, a thorough history is an important source of information. Family members will often have very good insight into a loved one's balance. Second, there are different tests such as the Timed Up and Go Test, the Berg Balance Test, and the Tinetti Balance Test that will give us normative data on your balance. Third, measurements on your range of motion, flexibility, and strength of the muscles give objective clues about your balance. Fourth, myofascial, tissue integrity, and reflexes and coordination are assessed and correlated with your gait. Lastly, your walking is evaluated to look for patterns that impact balance and coordination.

Maintaining balance and preventing the loss of balance

Exercise: The nervous system has an amazing capacity to regenerate at any age. With proper training, it is possible to adjust, compensate, and even develop new skills as it relates to balance. It is generally agreed that exercise to improve cardiovascular fitness, strength, (particularly in the core and legs), and functional fitness training designed to improve agility, coordination, and balance, will all have a significant impact on a person's overall balance.

There are many types of exercise that can help with your balance. Activities such as thi-chi, yoga, and Pilates are good if you are able to handle these types of programs. There are also simple exercises that you can do at home. A couple examples of some good balance activities are listed below. As always, consult with your physical therapist or doctor if you are unsure if it is safe to do these or not for your condition.

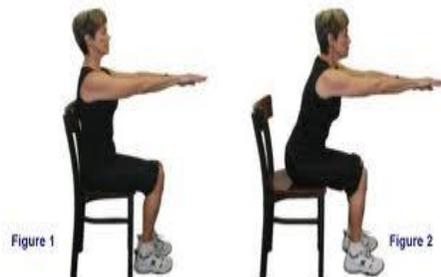
Exercise, Exercise, Exercise



A simple functional balance training activity that a person can do at home is to stand near a counter and work on one legged standing while doing activities such as brushing your teeth. Try not to hold on to the counter with this activity or just use your fingertips, if possible. Your goal is to increase the time that you are able to stand on each leg, and to gradually decrease the support of your hands on the counter.



Another simple exercise that strengthens your legs, as well as works on your balance, is to sit in a chair. Lean forward so that your head is over your toes and attempt to stand up. If you need to hold on to something to get up, start there and then work on decreasing your reliance on holding on as your legs strengthen. Ultimately, you would like to get to the place where you are able to do this with your arms extended using only leg power and balance to get you up.



Important Notes about exercising:

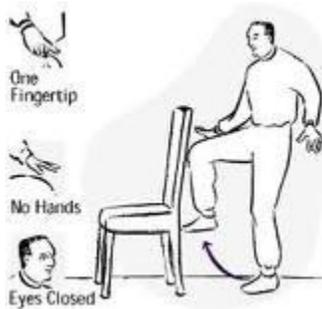
- ✓ If in doubt, check it out
- ✓ Don't try exercises alone until you are comfortable
- ✓ Slowly, consistently
- ✓ Work smarter, not harder
- ✓ Never, "no pain, no gain"
- ✓ Safety first

Healing injuries, restoring lives

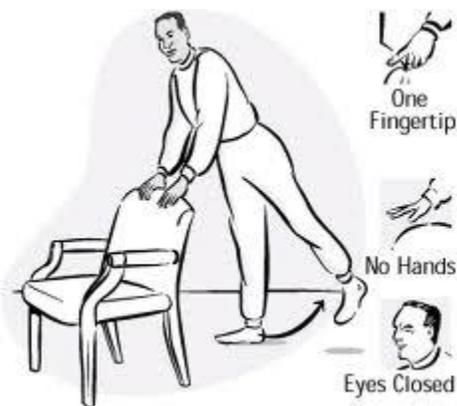


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A third effective exercise is to march in place using a chair or counter top. Again, you can progress from holding on to the chair or counter with two hands, to using just one hand, to a finger tip, to no hands, to eyes closed.



You can follow the same progression, but instead of marching, bring your leg behind you, making sure you keep your upper body straight and just hinge at the hip.





Modify your environment: There are multiple ways we can decrease our risk of falling at home with some simple, but surprisingly effective tips.

- **Remove rugs and obstacles and that could cause you to trip**
- **Place handrails along stairways, entryways and hallways, as needed**
- **Slow down, don't hurry, plan your day**
- **Wear non-skid shoes that fit well and are supportive**
- **Stay off ladders**
- **Give up manual chores that feel risky and make you afraid of falling**
- **Stay off ladders**
- **Don't overtire**
- **Place grab bars in the bathroom where needed, especially in tub and around toilet**
- **Consider a bedside commode if falling at night when getting up to go to the bathroom or if you have urgency**
- **Place a rubber mat in shower or tub**
- **Ensure good lighting, put night lights up from bed to bath for night**
- **Carpeting is the safest floor-continuous weave is the easiest to push a walker on**
- **No rolling or rocking furniture**
- **Use a cordless phone**
- **Keep frequently used kitchen items at elbow reach to prevent reaching and bending**

Modify, Modify, Modify

Healing injuries, restoring lives



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Physical Therapy

Physical Therapy can be a very effective treatment option for balance and fall issues. An individual plan will be developed based on your unique needs. Treatment will be oriented on improving strength, flexibility, and balance and coordination. A typical program will last four to six weeks along with a home program so that you can continue to work on improvement after you are done. **Remember that a physician referral is not necessary to have an evaluation at Guenther Physical Therapy.** We will coordinate your plan of treatment with your physician of choice and contact him or her if there are any concerns about underlying medical problems contributing to your balance and fall issues.

The CARE™ Approach

At Guenther Physical Therapy, we deliver complete patient healing and restored function to pre-injury levels. For 23 years, we have applied the **CARE™** approach to our work.

Complete Attention

Our patients receive a personal treatment process. We work one on one with you to heal your injury.

Results

With one on one care, you receive immediate satisfaction and healing.

Experience

At the end of your treatment, you leave with a **positive reaction, healed injury, and restored life.**

