Otago Exercise Program

A fall prevention exercise program

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What is a Fall?

- When you come to rest unintentionally to the ground or to any lower place
- With or without an injury
- Slips, trips
- Sliding off of chair when trying to sit down
Fall Prevention - Why are we concerned?

- As we age, our balance gets worse and we get weaker unless our bodies continue to be challenged
- One in four older adults (65+) fall each year
- Falls can be prevented!
- Improved independence and quality of life with fewer/no falls
Other issues which can influence fall risk (besides strength & balance):

- Medication side effects or other medical causes;
- Eyesight
- Hearing
- Unsafe shoes or slippers
- Unsafe environment
Why see a Physical Therapist?

- PT will evaluate to determine whether Otago or other exercise program would be most beneficial
- Identify problems which might limit benefits of Otago, or need modification:
  - Cognitive difficulties: may need a buddy/caregiver to assist
  - Neurological issues: may benefit from a referral
- Make other referrals for vision, hearing, medication management, neurologist, occupational therapy, etc.
- Prescribe exercises based on your needs and ensure your safety
What types of exercise work best for fall prevention

- Exercises need to challenge balance (done in standing)
- Must be progressed regularly once you’ve improved and exercises aren’t hard any longer
- Exercises have to be done consistently over many months
What is the Otago Exercise Program?

- Pronounced “O-tog-O”
- Started in New Zealand at University of Otago
- Targeted exercises, made more difficult with time to challenge strength & balance
- Most exercises are done in standing
- Uses Ankle Weights for strengthening
- Covered by Medicare/insurance
- Typically provided by PT in the home or an outpatient clinic
What is the Otago Exercise Program?, continued

- Exercises have to be done regularly to get benefits; done INDEPENDENTLY in the home between visits by PT
- 30 minutes of exercises 3 times a week,
- Walking may be added up to 30 minutes 3 x/week
- 2 hours of exercises a week to get benefits of fall prevention (Am college of Sports Medicine for Older Adults)
Who might benefit from doing Otago exercises?

- Particularly good for anyone with significant weakness or balance problems
- Had a fall, or are afraid of falling
- Older adults who live in the community but might be frail
- Able to walk independently, with/without a walking aid
- 80 year old and older, can have significant improvement of quality of life
What to expect from Otago Exercise Program?

- 35% reduction in high risk of falls
- Reduce falls and injuries from falls
- May start with an Otago Exercise Program, then progress to a more challenging exercise community program
- May not be the right program for an active older adult with lower fall risk, another program might be better such as Tai Chi.
Resources

- National Council on Aging (NCOA) has a video with many exercise programs described including Otago Exercise Program, Tai Chi, A Matter of Balance
  https://www.ncoa.org/resources/you-have-the-power-to-prevent-a-fall-video/

- Listing of Otago-trained therapists in New Mexico on Paths To Health NM website under “Find a Class”:
  https://www.pathstohealthnm.org
Questions??

Think of questions later?
Email me at Beth Black, PT: BBlackPT@gmail.com

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Ask your Dr for a strength and balance assessment referral to a Physical Therapist, or ask your Physical Therapist directly