

# 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](mailto: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*