

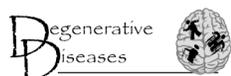
FACT SHEET



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Physical Therapy for Fall Prevention in People with Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's Disease (PD) and Falls



SPECIAL

INTEREST

GROUP

Parkinson's disease (PD) usually affects older people. It causes tremors (shaking of hands and/or legs), slow movements, problems with starting movements, and muscle tightness. Falls in persons with PD are common, and may happen more often over time. There are many causes of falls in people with PD, such as:

- problems with walking and balance loss
- poor posture
- joint stiffness
- doing two things at once such as walking and talking
- tripping on a curb or object while walking
- using a walking device (cane, walker) in an unsafe way.

Fall prevention is very important for all elderly people. Those with PD who fall are more likely to have a hip fracture than those without the disease, so special care should be taken to prevent falls in these people.

How Can Physical Therapy (PT) Help?

Since PD tends to worsen over time, seeing a physical therapist as soon as possible after diagnosis is important. A proper exercise program during the early stages of the disease can help delay the start of slowed movements, tight muscles, and balance and walking problems. Physical therapists know what types of exercises will help people with PD and how to change exercises for each person depending on the person's physical abilities.

There are many exercises that may help people with PD prevent falls. Relaxation and stretching of tight muscles and joints can help with freer movement. Physical therapists may suggest yoga and tai chi exercises to relax and stretch muscles. Sometimes people with PD fall when they change from one position to another. Physical therapists can suggest exercises that help with position changes such as standing up from a chair and getting up and down from the floor without falling.



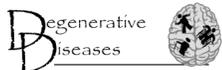
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PD Fall Prevention



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Walking exercises can improve the ability to stop and start quickly, change directions, walk outside on uneven ground, and do more than one activity at a time without falling. Balance exercises help train people with PD to react quickly to stop falls from happening while sitting, reaching, standing, and walking. A physical therapist can recommend a safe walking device if needed, and will teach proper use of it.

At later stages, physical therapists can suggest ways to make activities easier and teach caregivers how to help the person with daily tasks. At all stages of the disease, physical therapists can recommend a personalized home exercise program to keep muscles strong, joints moving well, and make the most of balance and walking abilities to prevent future falls. By reducing fall risk, physical therapists can help people with PD to stay as independent as possible and to enjoy their lives fully.



American Physical Therapy Association
The Science of Healing. The Art of Caring.

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