

Falls and Parkinson Disease (PD)

Why do falls happen with PD?

Changes in your balance reflexes, coordination, and even in strength

You to move more slowly

You may experience what is known as 'freezing'

Freezing is when you are having difficulty starting a movement or become unable to continue moving. Some people with Parkinson disease find that they become stuck or 'frozen' when they try to turn a corner or turn around. Others may experience freezing whenever they walk through a doorway.

Falls in PD occur most often when turning, getting in and out of chairs, and with freezing.

Another frequent cause of falls in PD is what is known as orthostatic hypotension, a sudden drop in blood pressure when you go from lying down or sitting to standing.

When a person experiences orthostatic hypotension, they begin to feel dizzy and to black out several seconds after coming to standing.

How do I recognize when I need Physical Therapy to help with my falls?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stumbling or loss of balance while walking. • Difficulty making turns, going around corners. • Difficulty getting out of chairs/couches. • Difficulty getting on and off the toilet. • Difficulty controlling how fast you sit down on a chair/couch/toilet. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have had a fall. • Experience freezing episodes. • Experience dizziness. • Feeling of anxiousness or have changed how you do your activities due to fear of falling. |
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What should be included in a Physical Therapy program to help address falls?

- **Balance training.** This would include having you do things like:
 - Standing with your feet close together, one in front of the other, or on one foot.
 - Practice standing and/or walking on different surfaces such as a soft mat, grass, an uneven surface, and up and down inclines (eg. ramps, hills).
 - Working on balancing with your eyes closed or in a dark room.
- **Working on walking.** This may include:
 - Practice maneuvering around obstacles.
 - Practice walking while doing something else like counting backwards or carrying a cup of water.
- **Strength training.** Work on improving strength in weak muscles and in your leg muscles specifically.

How do I maintain the gains I made in Physical Therapy and prevent future falls?

- Attend a group exercise program in your community, or online, as this has been shown to be an effective way to maintain the gains from therapy and to reduce fall risk.
- Performing a home exercise program. This program should:
 - Be ongoing.
 - Include exercises for strength and balance.
 - Recommended that it be prescribed by your physical therapist.

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Stop Falls in PD

