

NEW YORK STATE OSTEOPOROSIS
NYSOPEP
 PREVENTION & EDUCATION PROGRAM
 STATEWIDE OSTEOPOROSIS RESOURCE CENTER

NYSOPEP
 New York State Osteoporosis Prevention and Education Program



September is National Fall Prevention Month.
 So **Move to Balance!**

What is Balance?

Balance is the ability to move efficiently in a variety of environments without falling. Balance is also referred to as 'postural control' because it involves controlling a position or posture of the body at rest or when moving.

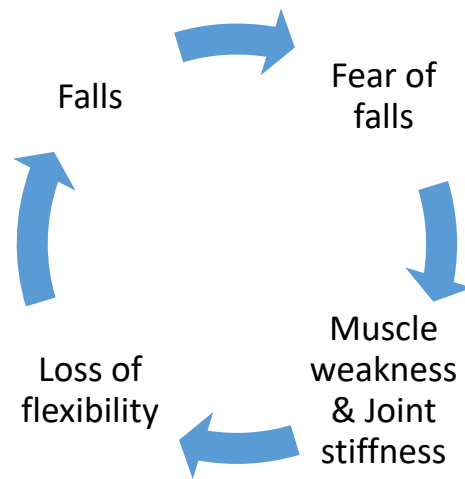
From Balance to Falls

Falls account for approximately 10% visits to ER & 6% of hospitalizations among Medicare beneficiaries. An estimated 33% of older adults fall each year & this rate rises to nearly 50% for persons over the age of 80. Falls lead to a 'fear of falling again'. This negatively affects activities of daily living, level of physical activity, quality of life & participation in meaningful activities.

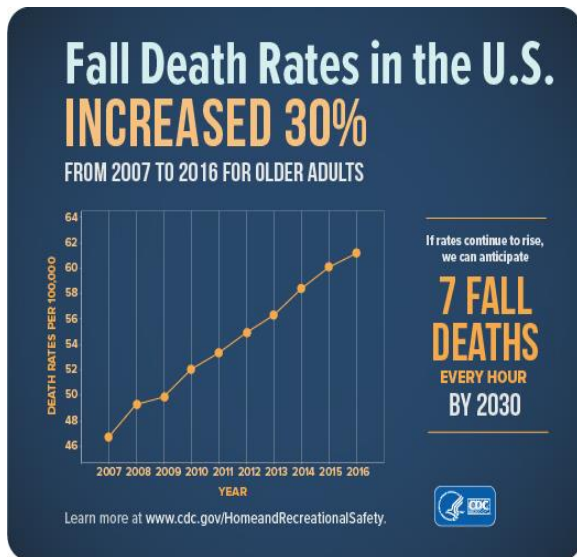
Risk Factors for Falls:

1. Leg weakness	6. Difficulty walking
2. Poor grip strength	7. Visual deficits
3. Urinary Incontinence	8. Cognitive impairments
4. Balance disorders	9. Medications
5. History of falls	10. Environmental

A vicious cycle



Falls lead to 'fear of falls' which reduces the level of physical activity and affects quality of life. Lack of movement leads to muscle weakness, loss of flexibility and joint stiffness. All of the above further increase risk of falls.



Does balance worsen with age?

Balance dysfunction is not a part of aging, but is often associated with a decline in muscular strength and sensory systems. Numerous studies have shown that strength and balance go together. In other words, better overall strength leads to better balance.

Take Action!

American Geriatrics Society suggests that an exercise program to improve balance must be designed based on individual impairments. Balance exercises are meant to challenge 'balance', hence should be designed by a Physical Therapist.

Balance exercises need to be practiced at least 4-5 days in a week for long-term benefits. Talk to your healthcare provider for adjustments in medications that can lead to loss of balance. Obtain appropriate referrals for physical therapists, vestibular and/or eye specialists, so they can help improve your balance and reduce risk of falls. Make your home environment safe. Learn correct body mechanics for activities of daily living.

Always be prepared!

- Keep a cell phone, portable phone or emergency response phone with you at all times.
- Arrange for a family member or friend to call you at a specific time each day.
- In case of a fall, do not stand up right away. Take a deep breath, use a chair or sturdy furniture close by to rise enough to sit on the floor or chair and rest.
- If you are hurt or cannot get up, call for help and wait until help arrives.
- Make sure to let your doctor and/or physical therapist know you fell, even if you are not hurt!



For more information on bone health, visit www.nysopep.org, email info@nysopep.org, or call the NYSOPEP resource center at Helen Hayes Hospital, West Haverstraw, NY at 845-786-4772. (New York State Department of Health).