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Physiotherapists provide tips for seniors



Preventing Falls

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More than 1 in 3 elderly Canadians (ages 65 and older) fall each year. It's estimated that 50% of those who fall will suffer moderate to severe injuries such as sprains, hip fractures, or head traumas that can permanently reduce their mobility and independence.

Physiotherapy Can Help

Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also teach you how to prevent the onset of pain or injury that can limit your activity. A physiotherapist can help evaluate the home environment to identify ways to prevent unnecessary accidents.

Direct health care costs relating to falls among seniors in Canada are estimated at \$1 billion every year.

This accounts for 84% of injury-related admissions to hospitals, 40% of all admissions to nursing homes, and a 10% increase in home-care services.

More than 90% of incidents that result in injuries are predictable and preventable. Studies show that modifying the home and reducing hazards in the community can reduce the risk of falls by half. Impaired vision or mental functioning, along with medications, are other risk factors.

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Many seniors imprison themselves in their homes from a fear of falling. By doing this, they lose the physical benefits of normal activities and may compromise balance and muscle strength, putting themselves at even greater risk of falling, even at home. A targeted physiotherapy treatment program can help maintain or regain strength, flexibility and endurance in a way that still feels safe and secure.

A physiotherapist will review a senior's medical history and determine general physical condition, and will conduct a

series of tests specifically designed to measure strength, flexibility, balance and walking. After determining any limitations, a program of exercises and activities will be prescribed with an overall goal of improving physical function

In the event that poor balance is caused by damage to the inner ear, and there are additional symptoms such as vertigo, dizziness, or nausea, a physiotherapist may also prescribe a vestibular rehabilitation program that will correct the inner ear response to changes in position.

Tips to reduce the risk of falling:

- **Wear a good pair of lace-up walking shoes that will support your feet and provide necessary cushioning for your joints;**
- **Avoid high heels, slippers, and open-toed sandals, which can cause you to trip;**
- **Use aids for walking, balancing, hearing and seeing – view them as sources of strength to help you do things, not signs of weakness;**
- **Remove reading glasses when walking;**
In winter, sprinkle kitty litter or salt and sand to the curb. It might also help to sprinkle some on the snow/ice before getting out of the car;
- **Make sure the tips on canes and crutches are large and spiked for icy conditions. Remove the spikes as soon as you enter a building;**
- **Sit rather than stand while dressing;**
- **When moving from lying to sitting, wait 10 seconds before rising. When moving from sitting to standing wait 10 seconds before moving away from a bed, chair or toilet;**
- **Install handrails and grab-bars in the stairways and bathrooms ;**
- **Make sure stairways are well lit. Install a night light at the top of the stairs;**
- **Immediately wipe up any spills, especially on ceramic floors;**
- **Avoid taking unnecessary risks like standing on furniture. Instead, use a sturdy stepladder, or better yet, ask for help;**
- **Plant both feet securely on the ground before getting out of the car;**
- **Put everyday items on a shelf at eye level;**
- **Manage medications properly;**
- **Be mindful around pets. Feet can get caught in leashes, dogs can knock you down or you can trip over the sleeping or wandering pet.**