

## Balance and Falls, Continued

Two falls in a 6 month period is considered to be significant. A person who has a history of falls or near-falls can benefit from a balance and fall risk assessment. An assessment can be performed by a physical therapist at Advanced Physical Therapy and Health Services. Your assessment may include balance testing, observation of ambulation, endurance, and testing of range of motion, sensation, and strength. Based on those findings, your physical therapist can develop an appropriate exercise program for you that targets the areas in which you are most impaired.



Talk to your physical therapist or to your physician if you feel you might benefit from a Balance and Fall Risk Assessment.



This brochure is compliments of  
**Advanced Physical Therapy & Health Services**

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[www.apths.com](http://www.apths.com)



# ADVANCED PHYSICAL THERAPY & HEALTH SERVICES, LLC

is a private, physical therapist-owned outpatient physical therapy clinic specializing in neurologic, orthopedic, and vestibular conditions.

All patients are evaluated by a licensed physical therapist.

We guarantee to see you for an initial evaluation within 24-48 hours.

We have early morning and late evening hours for convenient scheduling.

We accept and are in-network with most insurance companies, including PPO's, HMO's, Medicare, Tricare, and Workers' Compensation.

*Conditions we evaluate and treat include, but are not limited to:*

- Neck & back injuries/pain
- Arthritis
- Vertigo
- Sprains/Strains
- Parkinson's Disease
- Fractures
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Tendonitis
- Gait & balance disorders
- Bursitis
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Stroke
- Sports injuries
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- Work-related injuries
- TMJ disorder/pain
- Nerve injuries / disorders
- Joint replacements
- Cervicogenic headaches
- Orthopedic surgeries

## Information about Balance and Falls



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# Balance and Falls

A person's balance can be affected by different impairments involving various body systems. These systems communicate to the brain as to where a person is in space and to help them react to variables in the environment that may perturb their balance.

**Muscle strength** plays an important part in maintaining balance. If a muscle or a group of muscles are weak, a person may not be able to act quickly or strongly enough to counteract perturbations in the environment. For example, if you were to step onto a crack in the sidewalk, both large and small muscle groups need to be activated to prevent you from falling by acting quickly and strongly to keep you upright.

The **inner ear system** uses nerve pathways to tell the brain how your head is moving. Each time you turn, tilt, or move your head, your inner ear system sends signals to your brain. This allows the rest of your body react to your movement.



Your **somatosensory system** relays signals to your brain about where your body weight is shifting, how much pressure you are putting on a particular area of your body, and joint position (e.g. whether your knee is bent or straight).



Your **eyes** are a part of your sensory system that relay signals to your brain about your surroundings. For example, if you see that your surroundings are coming closer to you, you may perceive that you are moving forward.



If any of these areas are deficient, balance problems may be present. Whether it involves improper or delayed signals relayed by the inner ear system, your feet not being able to feel that your weight is shifting to your toes, if your muscles do not receive the signals to react quickly or strongly, or if you are unable to see a rug laying on the floor at night that you might trip over; an imbalance between the messages relayed to and from your brain can result in falls, feelings of dizziness, disequilibrium, or unsteadiness.

Your balance can also be affected by medications. Side effects of some medications can include drowsiness, dizziness, and fatigue; all of which can impair your balance.

In order to reduce your fall risk, consider the following suggestions:

- Remove all loose rugs and clutter in your home that can lead to tripping.
- Place often used items within arms' reach in cabinets to avoid using a step stool.
- Utilize grab bars near toilets, showers, and tubs, as well as non-slip mats on the floor of these areas.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have non-slip soles. Avoid slippers.
- Keep night lights in the hallways and along the path to your bathroom in case you need to get up at night.
- Review your medications with your doctor to avoid interactions and to address any side effects you may be experiencing as listed earlier.
- Begin a regular exercise program to improve your balance, coordination, and strength. A physical therapist can assess your balance and help to determine which exercises are appropriate and safe for you.

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