

Reducing the Risk of Falls in Older Adults

Falls are a significant concern among older adults living in the community, often leading to serious injuries, hospitalization, and even a loss of independence. Most falls result from a combination of factors and identifying common and modifiable ones is essential to reducing the risk of falls and their potential complications. The 2020 article, *Prevention of Falls in Community-Dwelling Older Adults*, outlines key strategies to help lower the risk of falls.

The Role of Exercise

It's no surprise that exercise helps reduce the risk of falls. In fact, studies show that regular exercise can reduce the rate of falls by 23%. Some research even suggests that long-term exercise programs may help lower the number of falls that lead to fractures. The most effective programs are those that focus on improving leg strength and balance. One example of exercise program that the article suggests is the home-based Otago program. This program includes strength exercises, balance exercises, and walking. Strength and balance trainings are typically performed 3 times per week for 30 minutes combined and walking is recommended at least twice weekly for 30 minutes. The exercises are individually tailored and become progressively more challenging over time. It generally runs for about a year. More information on the Otago program can be found [here](#). Additionally, gait, balance, and strength assessments can be helpful in identifying the best exercise program or lifestyle adjustments to reduce fall risks. Some of these assessment tools include the [Timed Up and Go](#) test and the [Tandem Balance Test](#). Because practicing regular fall prevention exercises can be challenging for many of us (they're not much fun), developing a weekly routine, exercising with others, and tracking your progress as you improve are just some of the ways you can ensure that they become part of your work-out plan.

Medications and Fall Risk

Certain medications can increase the risk of falls by causing side effects like sedation, confusion, or orthostatic hypotension, which is a significant drop in blood pressure when standing up which can make you dizzy or even faint. Therefore, it's important to review your medication list and consult your healthcare providers if you have any concerns.

Conclusion

While many older adults face an increased risk of falling due to a variety of factors, focusing on modifiable factors can significantly reduce the likelihood of falls and their complications. One of the most effective ways to lower fall risk is through a consistent exercise program, along with addressing medical and lifestyle factors such as medication management, vision care, and home safety.

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