

# Why do I fall or have problems balancing?

Most people will know an older person who has had a fall. One in three people aged over 65 will fall at least once each year. It is not only the 'frail' older people who fall, as there are many risk factors. Some falls may be minor however most falls result in fracture and hip fractures are particularly common

In 2003-2004 the estimated total cost for fall-related acute care in Australian hospitals for people aged 65 years or older was \$556 million.

## What can predict my risk of falling?

To stop ourselves from falling we need to have:

- Good balance – the ability to be able to stand, reach, and walk safely
- Good vision – to be able to see potential hazards in the surrounding environment
- Good reaction – to respond quickly to unexpected hazards
- Body awareness – to know when we are starting to fall to correct ourselves
- Good Strength – to stay upright and support ourselves in various positions and postures

Factors that can affect these include:

- General muscle weakness
- Dizziness / Vertigo
- Multiple medications

## How can I reduce my risk of falling?

Although a lot of the skills discussed previously do decrease naturally with age our bodies do have the ability to retrain such skills to improve our balance or if not limit further decline.

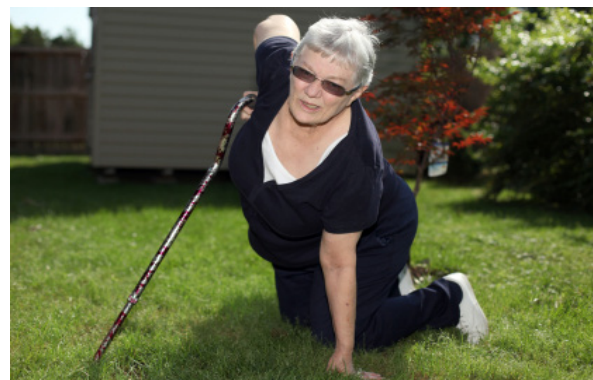
## Falls and balance class:

This class uses evidence-based methods to enhance your balance via providing challenging exercises and activities to improve your personal factors that are affecting your balance.

The main components of the class address:

- Strength
- Body awareness
- Balance Reaction Times
- Functional Re-training

All these components have been proven to improve your balance and shown to have a positive effect on all activities of daily living – i.e. will make you more independent



## Other tips for preventing falls

- Exercise regularly but within your limits – ensure this is discussed with your physiotherapist
- Use walking aids such as sticks, frames and walkers – all should be prescribed and fitted by your physiotherapist
- Good vision helps your balance – ensure you do not walk around the house with poor lighting and have your vision checked regularly
- “Fall proof your home” – do not have slippery mats, electrical cords or rugs sticking up around the home to ensure you don't catch your feet on them when walking
- Have a “falls emergency plan” – know how to get help if you do have a fall – and ask your physiotherapist the easiest way to get up off the floor if you do have a fall

## Our Falls Program

We will work with your health care team to assist in falls minimisation. We encourage all people to keep a falls diary which the team will use to monitor, assess and manage your falls.

Sometimes it is important to review all aspects of your daily activity, this may involve a home visit.

Falls prevention can be undertaken on a one on one basis or in a class situation. We run regular group classes to assist in the ongoing prevention.

Your Problem is:

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Suggested /Planned Management:

1. ....  
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2. ....  
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3. ....  
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4. ....  
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Specific Advice:

1. ....  
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2. ....  
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3. ....  
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4. ....  
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- Exercises
- Hydrotherapy
- Braces
- Weight loss
- Manual therapy
- Balance retraining
- Strength work
- Conditioning

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# FALLS AND BALANCE



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