

## Preventing falls

Hello everyone and welcome to the first blog from Functional Physio. I hope to write these on a regular basis relating them to both physiotherapy and fitness. These blogs will also be published on our website [www.functionalphysio.net](http://www.functionalphysio.net) and you can view the exercises on our You Tube channel Adam Lovegrove.

I thought I would begin this blog with my thoughts on preventing falls.

As we get older the risk of falling increases.

Statistically 33% of the population aged over 65 will suffer one or more falls during a twelve month period. This figure rises to nearly 40% of adults aged over 80. There are many detrimental consequences associated with people falling, including fractures and soft tissue injuries, hospital and nursing home admission (with subsequent medical costs) muscle wasting, and reduced confidence.

The risk of falling includes both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors include lack of strength, decreased range of movement (especially ankle dorsiflexion) poor balance, vision and vestibular (inner ear) problems. Extrinsic risk factors of falling are associated predominantly with the environment eg uneven pavement, medication and clothing, especially relating to footwear.

In my opinion the main thing to focus on to reduce the risk of falling is to increase the strength of your leg muscles. Weakness of these is linked to falls. Some exercises to include are to stand up from a chair. Step up onto a step, lunges, stiff leg deadlift, leg extension, hamstring curls and heel raises. (See you tube for demonstrations). You should also ensure your trunk muscles are strong performing upper body exercises such as rows and chest press in standing will ensure these muscles are strong.

The next thing to focus on is to ensure you have adequate ankle dorsiflexion. To assess this stand with your toes 3cm from a wall. Keep your back vertical, bend your knees, you should be able to touch the wall with your knees and keep heels straight and on the floor. If you can't do this your calf muscles might be tight and you need to stretch them. You can do this by placing your foot flat on a chair with your knee bent and lean forward so your knee moves over the toes. Hold this for 30 secs

The next thing to address is balance, I am not a great believer in static balance because we don't tend to fall when standing still. One exercise to do is take giant steps. You do this by lifting your knee to hip level and take a big step forward. Walk like this for 20 paces. You can also stand on one leg and touch the toes of the other leg in front and across of the standing leg and then behind and across the standing leg (see you tube for a demonstration of this and other exercises).

In addition, you have to ensure you get your eyes checked regularly, your footwear is in good condition and check any medication you are taking to see if it might effect balance.

Finally, I have also posted a technique to get up from the floor if you do fall. You can do this as a stand alone exercise as well.

I hope you found this blog has some useful tips. You can give me any feedback at [adandjacqui@aol.com](mailto:adandjacqui@aol.com)

Thanks for reading Adam