

Exercise, strength and balance keep women from falling

Falls and hip fractures rates in all older people can be reduced by strength and balance retraining exercises, Australian Physiotherapy Association president, Cathy Nall, said today.

One in three adults over the age of 65 will experience a fall this year, which can result in injury and even death. Among the injuries, hip fracture will be the most common – especially for women – and can seriously affect a person’s ability to remain independent.

“We know that in women, balance starts to decline over the age of 40, placing them at greater risk of fall. And because older women can also be affected by conditions such as osteoporosis and osteoarthritis, their risk of sustaining a fracture injury from a fall is greater.

“The good news is that exercise programs designed by physiotherapists can help improve strength, balance, endurance, fitness and bone density, all of which will help lessen the chance of falling,” said Ms Nall.

Studies confirm that physiotherapy exercise and balance training to reduce falls and injuries for older people can make a difference, and are recommended to help improve strength and balance.

Exercise and strengthening activities will also deliver greater benefit when tailored for an individual’s capacity and lifestyle, and where a physiotherapist provides supervision and ongoing monitoring.

“Many older people may already be exercising, but they need to be sure their technique is correct and that they are getting therapeutic benefit from it. Walking sticks and frames also need to be correctly prescribed and fitted – not borrowed from other people,” Ms Nall said.

And with growing evidence that an assessment of home hazards to minimise the risks can also reduce falls, it might be a good idea to invite a health professional home to check for risks such as poor lighting, slippery mats, dangling electrical cords and clutter.

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More information: [Physiotherapy tips to prevent falls](#).

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