

Finding Balance

In
The
Fall

By Jenna Rehnstrom-Liberto

Just as a graceful flamingo steadies itself effortlessly on one leg, balance gives us command of our surroundings and the ability to direct our daily tasks with independence and confidence.

If you're feeling unsteady or even just curious about your balance health at any stage of life, a free Fall Risk Assessment with the professionals at FYZICAL Therapy & Balance Centers of Dakota Dunes is a worthwhile 20 minutes to add to your appointment schedule.

"Falls are a big problem for people everywhere," says Dr. Sarah Sitzmann-Ruehle, PT, DPT. "Every 11 seconds, someone is seen in an ER for a fall-related injury."

Marking September as Falls Prevention Month, Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle, who specializes in balance physical therapy, says the most concerning part about a fall is the damage it can cause to the body physically, in terms of an injury like a bone fracture or hit to the head, and also to a person's self-esteem.

"One of the most significant things that occurs after a fall is a huge hit to our confidence leading to fear of falling. After you've fallen once, it gets in your head, especially if there was an injury tied to the first fall. A lot of what we work on is confidence building," shares Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle. And, while you may think the loss of balance is a natural part of getting older, she says age can be a factor, but it's not everything. The most concerning part of a fall as you age is the potential for serious injury.

"Over the age of 60, our bones aren't as good as they once were due to osteoporosis and arthritis, which leads to more broken bones from falls. This can mean surgeries, treatments, even time in a nursing home to recover, which can all get very expensive."

Which is why preventative physical therapy with FYZICAL can get you on the right track... before you're off track.

During a Fall Risk Assessment, the FYZICAL team uses a comfortable harness system on a track so you can't fall during any of the activities, which include testing your balance while standing still and walking. At the end of the assessment, you'll know if your fall risk is low, moderate or high. FYZICAL's Fall Risk Assessment is 100% free and only takes 20 minutes when you call ahead for an appointment.

"We love when patients come to see us when they haven't fallen, but just feel a little unsteady." Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle

"After the assessment, we can talk about the options you have and give our recommendations for moving forward. That may be exercises at home or starting a physical therapy plan of care—you don't need a referral," adds Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle.

Treatment usually starts with two sessions twice a week for five weeks, and FYZICAL will personalize your therapy to your lifestyle. That includes your schedule and your goals.

"When I consult with the patient when they first come in, I ask about those activities they want to do that they can't do or don't feel comfortable doing – whether that's picking up a baby or taking care of grandchildren – and then we mimic them," Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle says.

"It's about challenging them beyond what they can do at home or what they feel comfortable doing. They know that certain activities bother them, for example, walking over uneven ground, and so we work on those things. We simulate what they're doing at home – like gardening in an uneven yard – in a safe way, so we can practice those things," Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle insists. "The motivation is independence, and we can work to make sure they can keep their independence as long as they can."



Dr. Sarah Sitzmann-Ruehle
PT/DPT

Call FYZICAL today to schedule your free Fall Risk Assessment!

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