



## Balance Matters

October is National Physical Therapy month. September was National Falls Awareness month. I find it interesting that PT follows falls on our “National calendar”. It’s often the case therapists see folks after they’ve experienced a fall. That’s a good thing, as PT is helpful to get someone back on their feet, or work to recover from injuries sustained during a fall.

Truth be told, I'd rather see someone BEFORE they experience a fall. Physical Therapists are uniquely skilled to help individuals prevent falls. A knowledgeable therapist can accurately assess someone's balance and find specific deficits that increase fall risk. The therapist will then create an individualized program focused on overcoming those specific deficits. With proper assessment, practice, progression and education, therapists help people improve balance and reduce fall risk.

Balance involves an integration of multiple body systems including the visual, vestibular, muscular (strength and flexibility) and neurological (reaction time and body awareness) systems. While each of these systems decline with age, each and every one of them can improve with focused care and practice. Strengthening exercises may focus on standing on one leg, or marching on a cushion to challenge your ankle stability. Flexibility training may focus on calf flexibility, hip extension, or even neck rotation (so you can turn your head, not your body). Neurological training may involve quick changes in direction, or balancing on a rocker type board. Vestibular training may involve exercises involved with bending, reaching or turning while maintaining balance.

The key to success in this arena is one to one care. Too often, therapy these days revolves around exercise equipment, group exercise, or unsupervised care. This prevents the implementation of an individualized program, one based on reassessment and program progression or regression. At Noyes Health, we pride ourselves in offering professional, compassionate, and individualized care to each and every person we have the privilege to see.

**David Wolcott, PT, DPT, CSCS**  
**Staff Physical Therapist at UR Noyes Health Physical and Sports Therapy**

