

Welcome to Otago!

Welcome to the program! This exercise program has been designed specifically for you.

History

Otago is a muscle strengthening and balance retraining program that can reduce falls. It is delivered at home by a physical therapist through seven home visits over one year. The New Zealand Falls Prevention Research Group developed and tested the program. The rationale behind Otago is that while muscle strength, flexibility, balance, and reaction time are risk factors for falls, they can easily be modified.

Benefits

The benefits of exercise are plentiful—by maintaining your program, you can improve:

- Balance,
- Muscle strength,
- General fitness, and
- General well-being.

You need to do the prescribed exercises three times each week.

You can divide the exercises up; they do not have to all be done at the same time. Take three or more deep breaths between each set of exercises.

You may feel a little sore or stiff after you first start to exercise. This is quite normal. You are using muscles that may not be used to the exercise. It is important that you keep on exercising. The stiffness will leave as soon as your body becomes more familiar with the exercises.



Safety



Always check with your primary care provider and physical therapist prior to beginning any of the Otago strength, balance, and walking exercises. Only add exercises to your routine when your physical therapist has advised you to do so. Never exercise holding on to an object that may move, such as a chair. Always use the side of something stable like a counter or solid table, unless otherwise instructed. Exercises should not be painful. If you are experiencing pain, talk with your physical therapist to have the exercises adjusted. If illness stops you from maintaining the exercise program, contact your physical therapist before starting again.

Contact your primary care provider if you experience the following while exercising:

- Dizziness,
- Chest pain, or
- Shortness of breath (you are unable to speak because you are short of breath).

If you have any questions about the exercise program, do not hesitate to call your physical therapist or primary care provider.

Walking

Walking is an excellent way to improve your general fitness. Talk with your physical therapist before starting to walk as they should first assess your ability to walk indoors and outdoors using your usual walking aid(s). Try to go for a



walk on the days in between your exercises. Try to increase the distance and the time you spend walking. Take advantage of nice weather to go for a walk. Be safe while walking. See the *Walking Tips* handout for more information about walking, including safety tips.

Day to Day

Did you know that you can improve your general fitness by simply being more active in your day-to-day life? Here are some examples of activities to build into your day:

- Walk instead of drive to stores, as long as it is safe to do so,
- Walk to talk with your neighbor instead of using the telephone,
- Take the stairs rather than the elevator or escalator, and
- Stand to fold clean clothes.