

## **Balance and Falls Prevention**

There are many factors contributing to falls in older people. However muscle weakness in the legs, poor balance and altered walking patterns are among well documented causes and are the areas that physiotherapy treatment helps.

Other factors which may increase your risk of falling are the combination of your medications and poor eyesight. It is worth discussing these with your GP. It is also important to ensure your home environment is safe and well lit.

Try to be physically active. This becomes more and more important as you grow older. Thirty minutes a day of exercise is recommended.

Physiotherapists can offer a full falls risk assessment, and if appropriate will follow up with a targeted exercise programme. Many physiotherapists in New Zealand are using the Otago exercise programme to prevent falls in older adults. Using this programme the physiotherapist will select, from a variety of exercises, the most appropriate ones to strengthen your leg muscles and improve your balance. The physiotherapist will also discuss with you ideas about how you can increase your level of physical activity in a way that suits you.

As well as prescribing exercise programmes, physiotherapists can advise you on suitable foot wear, and provide walking aids if these would be helpful.