

## *New Innovations in falls prevention at the PADRECC's*

### **Portland PADRECC**

#### **High Intensity Exercise**

Dr. Fay Horak and her research team at the Portland VAHCS are looking into the use of a high intensity exercise program to help with those who have freezing of gait and falls. The 'high intensity' indicates a high number of visits over a short period of time. Exercises they use include boxing, agility training, and core body strengthening. One of the keys to the program is implementing dual tasking. This involves doing an exercise (say stepping along a rope ladder on the ground) while also doing a mental task (like having someone asking you to solve math problems).

### **Los Angeles PADRECC**

#### **Yoga**

Dr. Indu Subramanian and her team at the Los Angeles VAHCS are looking into the use of yoga to help with balance in Parkinson's disease as well it's ability to assist with stress reduction. Dr. Subramanian is working on a train the trainer program to instruct Los Angeles area yoga instructors on ways to target yoga classes to specifically help those with Parkinson's Disease.

## *Sources for more information*

### **Parkinson's disease and fall prevention**

Falls Prevention Workbook—141 pages  
[http://www.parkinson.org/sites/default/files/NPF\\_Manual\\_FallsPrevention.pdf](http://www.parkinson.org/sites/default/files/NPF_Manual_FallsPrevention.pdf)

Understanding Parkinson's: Falls Prevention  
[http://www.pdf.org/pdf/fs\\_falls\\_prevention\\_10.pdf](http://www.pdf.org/pdf/fs_falls_prevention_10.pdf)

### **General information on preventing falls**

Impact of Falls and Parkinson's Disease – My Parkinson's Story  
A PADRECC produced YouTube video on how falls affect people with PD and ways to prevent them  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW13PLLJKfE>

Fall Prevention: 6 tips to prevent falls  
By Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER).  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fall-prevention/HQ00657>

Check for Safety- A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults  
By CDC –Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/booklet\\_Eng\\_desktop-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/booklet_Eng_desktop-a.pdf)

**Parkinson's Disease Research Education and Clinical Centers (PADRECC)**

[www.parkinsons.va.gov](http://www.parkinsons.va.gov)

**1-800-949-1001x5769**

Revised 5/2017

Parkinson's Disease Research Education & Clinical Centers

# Fall Prevention



## PARKINSON'S DISEASE

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

## *Medical Support*

- Follow up closely with your medical team to fine tune your PD medications to improve your 'on' time.
- Let your neurologist know about all your medications, including over the counter drugs and supplements. Some medications can interact with each other and make you groggy or dizzy.
- Your doctor can prescribe safety devices, such as grab bars and raised toilet seats, assistive devices for ambulation such as special canes and walkers that may improve your stability and prevent falls.
- Your doctor can prescribe physical and occupational therapy sessions to help you regain strength, improve posture and to train you in the proper use of assistive devices.
- Have your vision checked and corrected at least once a year. Avoid the use of bifocals or trifocals while walking. A separate pair of glasses for distance vision can be used at that time.
- Request to be screened for peripheral neuropathy, a condition that causes numbness in the feet along with poor balance.
- Have your vitamin D levels checked, especially if you have infrequent exposure to sunlight. Deficiency of vitamin D has been associated with increased weakness and falls.

## *Household Safety*

- **Hallways / Walking areas**
  - Avoid clutter - throw rugs, decorative items, furniture, etc.
  - Avoid electric or telephone cords.
  - Install non-skid surfaces for walkways.
  - Install hand rails on both sides of stairways / on wall of long hallways.
  - Install light switches at both the top and bottom of stairways.
  - Mark edges of steps for easy visibility.
  - Keep areas well lit
- **Kitchen**
  - Keep frequently used items stored at waist level.
  - Consider a rolling cart to carry items from counter to table
- **Bathrooms**
  - Install grab bars and non-skid tub mats or adhesive strips.
  - Consider a bath bench in the bathtub or shower.
- **Bedrooms**
  - Lamps and light switches should be easily accessible from chair or bed.
  - Adjust height of bed so it is easy to stand up.
  - Use night lights.
  - Consider using a motion-sensor under night stand to automatically turn on lamps if you get up at night
  - Consider a bedside commode or a urinal to decrease trips to bathroom.

## *Helpful Everyday Tips*

- Try to take your medications on time.
- Taking Levodopa at least 30 minutes before having a protein meal will usually help you achieve a better effect with your medication.
- Drink water liberally to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- When you are standing, try to keep your feet approximately shoulder width apart to maintain balance.
- Use stretching exercises to stay limber and resistance exercises to increase your strength.
- Therapeutic Qi Gong and Tai Chi are ancient Chinese exercises that improve balance. Look for fitness centers or support groups that offer these classes.
- Change positions slowly from lying to sitting or sitting to standing.
- Try to avoid carrying objects using both hands so one hand remains free.
- Eat a healthy diet and get adequate sleep to be at your best.
- Use your prescribed walking aids regularly
- Wear appropriately fitting shoes with non-skid soles.
- When frozen, picture a line or spot on the floor and imagine stepping over it to unfreeze.