

## Falls Prevention Programs

### What are they and what's right for me?

Also see “Falls Prevention Program Pyramid” for more guidance on best fit for you or your loved one.  
 See “Where do I sign up” for registration information on community classes;  
 talk to your doctor about a referral to Geriatric Falls Clinic, Sure Step or Otago Programs.

Program	What it is	Description and good fit	Who can deliver	Program capacity, reach, length of program, other issues
<b>Geriatric Falls Clinic at the UW Geriatric Clinic</b>	<b>Falls assessment, recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help in identifying reasons for falling and ideas on how to decrease chances of falling.</li> <li>• Help with referrals and resources.</li> <li>• One extensive visit with follow-up and continued physical therapy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 years old or older.</li> <li>• Has falls and balance problems.</li> <li>• Good fit for people who use a cane or walker, but use of a walking aid not a requirement.</li> </ul>	Medical team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geriatric physician</li> <li>• Geriatric nurse</li> <li>• Social worker</li> <li>• Physical therapist</li> <li>• Occupational therapist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private appointment</li> <li>• 2-3 hour appointment.</li> <li>• Have to have balance problems.</li> <li>• Need referral from your doctor.</li> </ul>
<b>Sure Step</b>	<b>Falls assessment, recommendations and follow-up:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customized to home environment.</li> <li>• Help in identifying reasons for falling and ideas on how to decrease falls.</li> <li>• Help with obtaining equipment, referrals for health providers, exercise programs and ideas in making lifestyle changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have fallen in the past year.</li> <li>• Memory or thinking problems.</li> <li>• Live with someone.</li> <li>• Difficulty coming into a clinic.</li> <li>• Good fit for people who use a cane or walker, but use of a walking aid not a requirement.</li> </ul>	Home Health professional certified in Sure Step program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse</li> <li>• Nurse practitioner</li> <li>• Occupational therapist</li> <li>• Physical therapist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private appointment in the home or outpatient rehab.</li> <li>• First visit two hours.</li> <li>• Second visit one hour.</li> <li>• May need a third visit for some people.</li> <li>• Follow-up phone calls for one year.</li> <li>• Have to have balance problems and physician referral to justify insurance billing.</li> </ul>
<b>Otago Exercise Programme™</b>	<b>Falls education and exercise program:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help in identifying reasons for falling and ideas on how to decrease falls.</li> <li>• One-on-one exercise program prescribed by a physical therapist.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have balance and falls problems.</li> <li>• Good fit for people who use a cane or walker, but use of a walking aid not a requirement.</li> </ul>	Physical therapist visiting the home or at a rehab clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private appointment in the home or outpatient rehab.</li> <li>• Have to have balance problems and physician referral to justify insurance billing.</li> <li>• Minimum of 8 visits over 6 months.</li> </ul>

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<b>Stepping On™</b>	<p><b>Falls education and exercise program:</b> Falls prevention education in a group setting on medications, vision and moving around safely in the home and community.</p> <p>Exercises are in standing and include balance and leg strengthening.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have balance problems.</li> <li>• Have fallen or is fearful of falling.</li> <li>• Able to attend a group exercise class.</li> <li>• Good fit for people who use a cane or walker, but use of a walking aid not a requirement.</li> </ul>	Trained Health Professional (PT, OT, RN) and a peer co-leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group of 10-12.</li> <li>• 2 hour classes for 7 weeks. Home visit after the classes to review the home environment and review information from the classes. Then a booster class at 3 months.</li> <li>• Insurance does not pay for class.</li> <li>• If falls continue after completing the program, encourage individualized falls evaluation and physical therapy.</li> <li>• If exercises not challenging enough after completing the program, consider enrolling in the NoFalls exercise class or a Tai Chi class.</li> </ul>
<b>NoFalls™</b>	<p><b>Exercise Program:</b> Group exercise class using balance exercises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have balance problems.</li> <li>• Have had a fall in the past year or is fearful of falling.</li> <li>• Able to attend a group exercise class.</li> <li>• Fairly fit and independent.</li> </ul>	Class instructor who has received training on the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group of 15.</li> <li>• Insurance does not pay for class.</li> <li>• Class meets 1 x week for 15 weeks. Daily home program also included.</li> <li>• If falls continue after completion, try individualized falls evaluation and physical therapy.</li> <li>• If exercises not challenging enough after completion, try a Tai Chi-Yang style class.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Tai Chi-modified for people with balance problems</b></p>	<p><b>Exercise program:</b>            Tai Chi involves weight bearing stances and weight shifting, with attention to posture and breathing, body awareness, and how our thoughts impact our movements. There are multiple coordinated movements performed in a continuous, circular and flowing manner.</p> <p>Different Tai Chi programs are modified for people with balance problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have balance problems.</li> <li>• Have fallen or is fearful of falling.</li> <li>• Able to attend a group exercise class.</li> <li>• Fairly fit and independent.</li> <li>• Able to accommodate people who use a walker, cane, or who must sit.</li> </ul>	<p>Trained Tai Chi Instructor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance does not pay for class.</li> <li>• Classes that have been shown to reduce falls:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wolf: Simplified Tai Chi -10 modified Yang style movements over 15 weeks. Handout of movements used available in the CDC Preventing Falls: What Works. <a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a>.</li> <li>○ Tai Chi- Moving for Better Balance™. Class size of 15. 12 weeks with 8 forms modified from the Yang style. Class meets 2 x week and also 5 x week home practice. Book and DVD available.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Classes that have been shown to improve balance:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hain: Tai Chi for Balance - 8 modified Yang style movements over eight weeks. DVD available from <a href="http://www.dizziness-and-balance.com">www.dizziness-and-balance.com</a></li> <li>○ Tai Chi Fundamentals. May start out with some movements adapted to sitting. Will progress to standing movements to get improved balance.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If Tai Chi is too difficult or painful, encourage physical therapy with goal to gain improvements to be able to take Tai Chi class in future.</li> <li>• Private lessons are available with many instructors.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>MSCR Balancing Act offered through MSCR</b></p> <p>Visit <a href="http://www.mscr.org">www.mscr.org</a> for course offerings and registration</p>	<p><b>Exercise program:</b> Tai Chi involves weight bearing stances and weight shifting, with attention to posture and breathing, body awareness, and how our thoughts impact our movements. There are multiple coordinated movements performed in a continuous, circular and flowing manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to proactively improve and/or maintain balance.</li> <li>• Able to attend a group exercise class.</li> <li>• Pretty fit and independent.</li> </ul>	<p>Trained Tai Chi Instructor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance does not pay for class.</li> <li>• Yang-Style Tai Chi.</li> <li>• If Tai Chi too difficult or painful, consider physical therapy with goal to gain improvements to be able to take Tai Chi class in future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tai Chi Independent</b></p>	<p><b>Exercise program:</b> Tai Chi involves weight bearing stances and weight shifting, with attention to posture and breathing, body awareness, and how our thoughts impact our movements. There are multiple coordinated movements performed in a continuous, circular and flowing manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to proactively improve and/or maintain balance.</li> <li>• Able to attend a group exercise class.</li> <li>• Pretty fit and independent.</li> </ul>	<p>Trained Tai Chi Instructor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance does not pay for class.</li> <li>• Different styles of Tai Chi.</li> <li>• Recommend 2 times a week for at least 12-15 weeks.</li> <li>• If Tai Chi too difficult or painful, consider physical therapy with goal to gain improvements to be able to take Tai Chi class in future.</li> <li>• Private lessons are available with many instructors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Senior Balance and Strength Classes</b></p>	<p><b>Exercise program:</b> Standing balance and strength exercises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to proactively improve and/or maintain balance and strength.</li> <li>• Able to attend a group exercise class.</li> <li>• Pretty fit and independent.</li> </ul>	<p>Fitness instructor with experience working with Seniors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend small groups of 10-15.</li> <li>• Class should be at least two times a week for 12-15 weeks.</li> <li>• See “Where do I sign up” for specifics on <i>Balancing Act</i> classes offered through MSCR – Goodman Rotary, <i>Living Falls Free</i> through UW Sports Medicine, and other strength and balance enhancing programs.</li> </ul>

**\*\*Medical symptoms that may limit participating in group exercise:**

- Needs one-on-one monitoring to progress balance exercises
- Homebound
- Cognitive problems (need to be mentally alert and able to understand instructions)
- Pain with standing > 5 minutes or with walking
- Unable to go up one flight of stairs
- Unable to walk greater than one block
- Dizziness with change in positions
- Chest pain with activity
- Shortness of breath or use of oxygen with activity

**Written by Terry Shea, PT, UW Health with input from members of Falls Prevention Task Force of Safe Communities. For more information, visit [www.safercommunity.net](http://www.safercommunity.net) or contact Ms. Shea at [tshea@uwhealth.org](mailto:tshea@uwhealth.org).**