# Occupational Therapy and
# Fall Prevention

## What is OT?

Occupational Therapy (OT) helps people to participate in the activities and tasks that are important to their daily lives. Occupational Therapy Practitioners (OTPs) work with people of all ages and needs to assess and give recommendations for:

- the person themselves,
- the activity they are engaging in, and/or
- the environment they are in.

## Why is fall prevention important?

In 2021, almost 200,000 North Carolinians visited an emergency department due to an unintentional fall. Nearly 20,000 older adults (65+) were hospitalized due to a fall. On average, North Carolinians aged 65+ were charged more than $61,000 for each fall-related hospital stay. Twenty percent of falls cause serious injuries, including hip (or other bone) factures or head injuries. Falling once also increases your risk of falling again.

## What do OTPs do?

Occupational Therapy Practitioners (OTPs) look at the whole person. This includes physical, mental, and emotional abilities and needs. There are many factors that can increase your risk of falling, including:

- overall weakness,
- fear of falling, or
- tripping hazards in the home.

OTPs can evaluate your specific situation and create a plan for ways to lower your risk of falling. This could include:

- recommending changes to your home,
- demonstrating helpful equipment or other devices,
- exploring safer ways to do your daily activities,
- or learning safe ways to get up after a fall.

OTPs also work with people who have fallen before to help lower their risk for future falls.

## How can I access an OTP?

Occupational Therapy Practitioners (OTPs) work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing facilities, individual homes, and community sites. You may need a referral from a medical provider.

## Does this apply to me?

According to the CDC, risk factors for falling include:

Previous falls or a fear of falling

Leg, foot, or hip weakness or pain

Difficulties with walking or balance

Taking multiple medications

Vision challenges

Slippery or loose footwear

Hazards at home like low lighting, uneven steps, lack of handholds, or cluttered walking areas

Chronic health conditions including arthritis, stroke, incontinence, diabetes, Parkinson's, and dementia

*References:*

*https://caot.ca/document/4058/Fall%20Prevention%20-%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf*

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*https://www.cdc.gov/falls/facts.html, https://www.cdc.gov/steadi/pdf/steadi-factsheet-riskfactors-508.pdf*

*https://ncdetect.org/unintentional-falls-dashboard/*

*https://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/DataSurveillance/Falls-Older-Adults-NC-FINAL.pdf*

*https://www.cdc.gov/falls/facts.html*

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Standing Strong North Carolina — Prevent Falls – Save Lives

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