



Screening for Balance and Functional Capacity at Home - Assessing Fall Risk

We all know people who are having some limitations functioning in their home or community environment. It is often hard to determine when further consultation with a medical professional might be beneficial, before further difficulties arise that would compromise a person's independence.

We wanted to provide you with some simple tests you can do to assess yourself, or help a friend or parent to do in assessing their functional level. We have included what is considered standard ability for these tests, along with a description of the tests themselves.

1 - Single leg Balance

Try to transfer your weight to one leg and stand on that leg for 10 seconds or greater without touching anything. Test both sides. Perform this near a counter where you are safe and can use your arms for stability if needed. **Results:** If you are UNABLE to transfer your weight to one leg and stand on that leg for 10 seconds without support or assistance, you are considered "at risk for falls".

2 - Sit to Stand Transfers

Sit in the middle or on front edge of the chair(s) you normally sit in at home. Can you stand up from this seat WITHOUT using your arms for any support? **Results:** You should be able to repeat this activity 8 times within 30 seconds in a controlled manner, without your arms. The fewer number you can do, indicates some weakness in legs for basic functional activities.

3 - Timed up and Go Test

This is a "timed test" so you will need to time yourself or have someone else time you. If you normally use a walking aid such as a cane or walker, you should use it for this test.

The test: Place a small object on the floor 10 feet in front of a chair that you normally sit in. Sit in the chair, with your back against the back of the chair. Begin timing when you start to stand up. Stand up, walk out 10 feet and around the object, and then back to your original sitting position on the chair. Walk only at a speed that feels safe and comfortable for you. Stop timer only when your back is again at rest in the chair.

Results: This is often tested 2-3 times, as the first one is considered a practice. Average the time of the last 2 attempts. A normal result is to complete one trial of the test in 10 seconds or less. If it takes you 14 seconds or longer, you are considered at risk for falls.

**Please ask us if you would like more information about the research behind these tests
and their normal values, or would like help in performing further assessment.**