

Questions and Answers about choosing the right fall prevention class.

Is your fear of falling keeping you from activities in your home and community? You can join other older adults to share stories and learn about ways you can reduce your risk of falling. The Leaders will help guide you in making decisions that work for you. Plus you'll learn some easy exercises that get you moving and build balance confidence. These programs come with evidence that older adults who participate really do have fewer falls, and more fun in life.

Who should take Stepping On or Matter of Balance?

Older adults age 60 and older who:

- Have had a fall in the past year, or have a fear of falling
- Walk independently, may use a cane or a walker
- Are able to participate in a group discussion
- Live in their own home or other independent living facility
- Are able to converse in English (some classes are given in Spanish)
- Have a desire to learn how to reduce their risk of falling
- Have a desire to improve balance, flexibility and strength

Should I take Stepping On OR Matter of Balance?

They are both great programs! Find the one that is closest to your home and fits your schedule the best.

In Colorado, Stepping On is taught by nurses and others through many of the hospitals in the state. Guest experts include physical therapists, pharmacists and community experts. There are seven two-hour classes

A Matter of Balance is taught by trained facilitators (coaches) and Master Trainers in local community settings such as senior centers, recreation centers, senior residences Volunteers of America and/or other locations. A guest health care professional addresses specific questions about medications and chronic conditions related to falls. There are eight two-hour sessions.

Who should take Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance or Moving for Better Balance (the YMCA program)?

Older adults aged 60 or older who

- Live in their own home or an independent living facility
- Who can walk easily (with limited use of canes and walkers)
- Interested in a 12-week class to improve balance, flexibility and strength
- Are able to attend a 45 to 60 minute session

In Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance, you may start out doing the exercises seated, but you will be encouraged to move to a standing position (with a chair available for support when needed). Learning the series of eight Tai chi moves will engage your brain and your body.

Who should take N'Balance?

- Older adults aged 60 and older who
- Live in their own home or independent living facility
- Who can walk easily for at least short distances without a cane or walker
- Who can stand with feet shoulder width apart, arms across chest and eyes open for 30 seconds.
- Interested in an active eight week class
- Are able to participate in 45 to 60 minutes session

What about other Tai Chi classes?

Tai Chi for Arthritis for Fall Prevention is another good choice for an evidence-based fall prevention program.

Tai Chi is great exercise for anyone. The gentle, thoughtful movements help strengthen the core muscles and engage the mind. For older adults, Tai Chi works to help prevent falls. The experts recommend at least 50 hours of Tai Chi (or other balance building exercise) to really see the fall prevention benefits. This can happen if you take a one-hour Tai Chi class twice a week for 6 months. Most classes are 12 weeks in length, so you can take two classes and /or practice at home.

Are there other good balance-building classes

Yes! Look for these type of exercises that make up balance-building:

- Reduce the base of support (e.g. standing with both feet close together, standing tandem or on one leg).
- Move the center of gravity, controlling the body's position while standing and moving (e.g. reaching safety, transferring body weight from one leg to the other, stepping over obstacles).

- Exercises are done in standing position, without using arms for support. If this is not possible, the aim should be to decrease the reliance on arm support. Chairs should be available as the student progresses and for safety.
- Gait training (e.g. walking on toes/heels, side stepping, walking at increased pace, and managing an obstacle course).
- Lower leg strength (knee raises, side leg raises, heel raises, stepping on to a step, and sit-to-stand exercises).
- All balance and gait exercises should be progressively challenging over the course of the exercise class, being tailored to the individual's needs and capabilities.
- Research shows the best results are for older adults who participate in 50 hours or more of exercise. Older adults should aim for THAT amount of balance-building classes or activities over a six-month time period.