

Physical Therapy After Hip Fracture in Older Adults

What New Guidelines Mean for You

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Hip fractures become more common as people age. If they occur when someone is 65 years of age or older, there are a number of things that can ensure a good outcome. Once hip fractures are treated, usually by surgery, rehabilitation begins. This should include physical therapy. The *JOSPT* published a clinical practice guideline titled “Physical Therapy Management of Older Adults

With Hip Fracture” in the February 2021 issue. Clinical practice guidelines are developed by experts in the field after they review and evaluate the best and most current research. They then summarize the findings and provide recommendations for clinicians to use in practice. In this Perspectives for Patients article, we share what the experts found and what it means for you or someone for whom you may be caring.



WHAT THEY FOUND

Researchers reviewed the most up-to-date research, summarized the results, and made recommendations for how physical therapists can help people with hip fractures best recover and return to their normal lives. The best care for people with hip fracture is delivered by a group of clinicians from different professions, including physical therapy. During the physical therapy examination, the therapist should assess things like pain, thigh muscle strength, and day-to-day tasks such as walking and standing up from a chair. In the early stage of recovery, physical therapists should help people with hip fracture get out of bed and move around as soon as possible. Physical therapists should also design an exercise program focused on strengthening the legs, balance, and mobility, and help people develop a plan to stay physically active once treatment is over.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

After your hip fracture, expect your physical therapist to test your leg strength and walking. You may also be asked to do a timed up-and-go test. The physical therapist will assess your risk for falling. Early on, physical therapy will include helping you get out of bed and move about until you can do so on your own or with assistive devices. Your treatment plan will include structured exercises, including strength training, balance training, and what is called “functional mobility training,” which helps you get back to your day-to-day activities. You may be asked to do some of these exercises at home, too. When you no longer need physical therapy, your physical therapist will help you find ways to stay physically active on your own. Remember, most hip fractures in older adults occur after falling, so it is important to ask your health care team what you can do to prevent falls.

RECOVERING FROM HIP FRACTURE. (A) Your examination will include some performance measures, like the timed up-and-go test, where you stand from a chair, walk to a line on the floor, and return to the chair. (B) Your rehabilitation will include structured exercise, such as resistance or balance training. (C) When your rehabilitation is complete, your physical therapist will help you find safe ways to stay physically active on your own.

This *JOSPT Perspectives for Patients* article is based on clinical practice guidelines by McDonough et al titled “Physical Therapy Management of Older Adults With Hip Fracture” (*J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.* 2021;51(2):CPG1-CPG81. <https://doi.org/10.2519/jospt.2021.0301>).

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