

6 Ways to Prevent Falls In Physical Therapy



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As patients begin to return to your practice after pandemic closures, being proactive about preventing patient falls is more important than ever. Here are six reminders to help keep your patients safe and minimize your risk for claims.

1. Assess your patients for fall risk.

Physical therapy patients are often at increased risk for falls due to existing injuries or following surgery, so your intake protocol likely already involves an evaluation of fall risk. However, if you stopped a course of treatment temporarily due to the pandemic, it's important to conduct a new assessment when they return. For maximum risk management, evaluate the patient's condition prior to each treatment.

2. Implement fall prevention interventions if needed.

Your fall risk assessment will indicate if you need to modify procedures or positions, or use assistive devices. If in doubt, always choose options with the lowest risk and move up from there.

3. Monitor high-risk patients at all times.

You may be able to set up some patients with exercises and walk away, but patients at increased risk for falls should never be left unattended. Use appropriate spotting and support techniques. It's also important to monitor a patient's nonverbal signs of pain or discomfort in addition to frequently asking. Remember, a patient can go from strong to fatigued quickly. And a fall risk is not reduced simply because a patient has done the same exercises in the past.

4. Refamiliarize patients and staff with your facility layout and procedures.

As your team returns after potentially months away from the clinic, it's vital to refamiliarize them with your protocols for set up and clean up

of equipment before and after treating patients. A single incident of forgetting to put a set of weights away or leaving a resistance band on the floor could result in a serious injury and claim for your business. It's also important to refamiliarize your patients with the layout of your facility and how to navigate safely in areas containing gym equipment and other trip hazards.

5. Educate your patients on fall risk and prevention.

You can help your patients maintain health and safety, and reduce the risk for falls, long after they leave your practice. Supply patients and their families with educational resources and suggest assistive devices and products if necessary. You can make fall prevention part of ongoing and follow-up care.

6. Document everything.

We can't emphasize enough how important your notes will be if a claim does arise. From your fall risk assessment, to a patient's responses to treatment, to verbal check-ins and replies, remember to include every detail in the patient's file. If in doubt...document!

You can help reduce your practice's risk of claims involving falls with these simple steps. For more information and guidance, contact your VGM Insurance Services Account Manager or contact us today at info@vgminsurance.com or **800-362-3363**.

