Osteoarthritis and Falls

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Minimizing Falls

People with osteoarthritis often experience difficulty with their day-to-day living because certain activities can cause pain or even joint damage to occur. However, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of pain and damage. According to research, falls and fractures are the two most common issues seen in osteoarthritis patients, with one often leading to the other. Sometimes falls can lead to serious injuries, which are difficult to heal due to the effects of osteoarthritis. Researchers suggest there are two main things – medications and lack of exercise – that cause falls in osteoarthritis patients, and by examining both of these areas, the number of falls could be reduced by nearly half.

Medication

A Boston hospital conducted a study on falls with osteoarthritis patients that looked at the prescription medications they were taking. According to the study, most patients with osteoarthritis were prescribed narcotic analgesics drugs to deal with their pain. The rate of patients on this type of drug who had a fall was 101 per 1000, compared to just 26 and 19 per 1000 patients on the other two drugs the study looked at. Additionally, the risk of a fall increased when patients were prescribed more medication than the absolute minimum. The study didn't offer an explanation for the connection between this type of drug and falls, but researchers suggested that if medication dosages were decreased to the minimum it could reduce falls.

Lack of Exercise

Balance issues due to lack of exercise was the main reason patients in the study fell. Some patients with osteoarthritis get little to no exercise due to the pain. Lack of exercise throws off balance, especially when issues with the bones and joints are present. Starting a regular exercise routine and maintaining it will help you to increase your range of motion, which will reduce your risk of falling.

Exercise will also help you to keep your weight in check, which is also important for reducing daily risk for osteoarthritis patients. Many people don't realize the impact weight has on your balance bones, and joints. When you're overweight, you're putting more weight on your bones and joints, which can cause damage to occur much more quickly in patients with osteoarthritis, as well as making pain worse. Additionally, excess weight can alter your balance, which in turn increases your risk of falling.

In order to reduce your risk of injury on a day-to-day basis, you need to find your healthy weight and maintain it. By reaching your optimum weight level you're creating a more proportionate figure, preventing excess pressure and keeping your balance in check.

Conclusion

It's important for patients with osteoarthritis to take the steps needed to reduce your daily risk factor. While

people without osteoarthritis can generally heal quickly after damage to the bones and joints, the deterioration that occurs in people with osteoarthritis makes healing more difficult. As a result, prevention is key to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.