

What's New



• East Athens Physical Therapy Kickball team

What our patients have to say!

"Great therapy. Knee improved greatly. Good therapist and friendly people."

— Robert from Madison

"I came in wondering if I would ever be able to use my left leg without helping it by lifting it with my hands. Now I am almost completely back to the way it was before the injury. Thanks so much."

— Jane from Madison

"Very happy with my therapy. Staff was wonderful. Happy to recommend EAPT to anyone."

— James from Athens

"I found the therapist capable, friendly, helpful and kind. No waiting. Always able to adapt to my limitations."

— Katherine from Athens

"This is a very well staffed facility. Everyone there is extremely nice and they all do a very professional job. It was a very pleasant experience."

— Jeff from Danielsville

"I was very pleased with the level of care and concern I had. They were quick to answer any and all questions and very encouraging with my progress."

— Sheri from Danielsville

EAST ATHENS PHYSICAL THERAPY

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Fall 2010

Maintaining our Balance

Maintaining our balance during daily activities is a vital but often overlooked task that we must perform. Our bodies utilize three main sources of information to maintain our balance. The first and most prominent source is our vision. The eyes relay information to the brain about our surroundings which helps our muscles know how to contract to stay upright. The second source of information comes from our peripheral nerves (called proprioception). We have millions of nerves throughout our body that respond to movement by sending signals to the brain. For example, this source of information allows us to know whether our elbow is straight or bent when our eyes are closed. The last source of balance is our vestibular system which consists of fluid filled canals and crystals deep to each ear. The movement of the fluid and crystals signal nerves that relay the information to our brain. The nerves, which are our electrical wires, relay the information from all three systems to help our brain decide what to do to stay balanced.

As we age our nerves conduct slower and need more of a stimulus to conduct. This results in a slower response time. Another issue of aging is muscle weakness which can make maintaining our balance harder. Our vision also tends to decline as we age, taking away our dominant source of balance information. All of these things plus a history of falls can lead to a fear of falling which can be devastating for the elderly. A fear of falling, when unaddressed, can lead to further decreased activity, leading to further decreased strength and endurance and further increased risk of falling.

Injuries may also affect balance in a couple of different ways. When muscles, tendons and/or ligaments are torn, thousands of tiny nerves within these structures are torn also, impairing our proprioception. Secondly, being inactive while the injury heals weakens the muscles that are needed for balance.

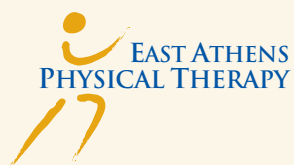
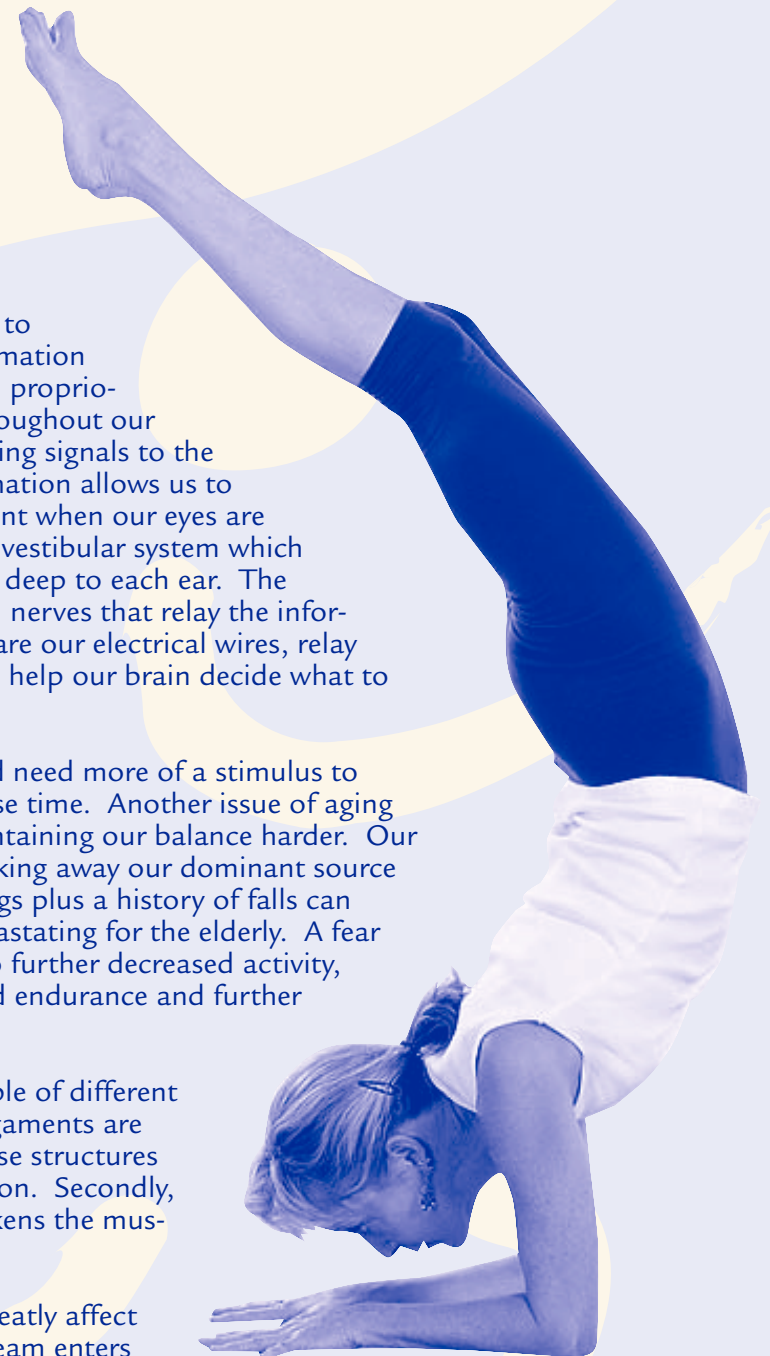
Diabetes Mellitus is a disease that can greatly affect balance. The extra sugar in the bloodstream enters our nerves and arteries and damages them. The surplus of sugar may be converted to fat and clog arteries which can decrease the blood supply to our nerves. This leads to decreased nerve activity starting out in our feet, progressing up our limbs ultimately decreasing our source of information for balance.

New research is starting to identify patients who have had a total knee and/or hip repair as having decreased balance. The decreased balance is theorized to come from the removal of the joint which has thousands of nerves used for balance information. Studies are starting to show that a physical therapy program addressing balance as well as function has better outcomes than those that only address function.

So how do you know if you are at increased risk for falling? Several studies have tried to predict someone's risk of falling. A simple but valid test is the single leg stance test. Studies have shown that if you can balance on one leg for 30 seconds without touching or holding onto something, your chance of falling is very small.

Here at East Athens Physical Therapy, we screen for balance on a lot of our patients. We can provide a safe and encouraging environment to help improve balance. We also test and when needed, strengthen the muscles that are needed for proper balance. If you have questions about your balance and/or risk for falls or future injury, discuss them with your doctor. If your balance is at risk and medicine is not to blame, physical therapy may be helpful.

— Justin Stewart DPT, CSCS

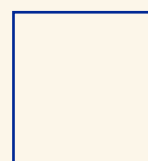


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Comeback players

Madison County High School



Trey Adams and Chris Warren, PT

Morgan County High School



Dylan Peppers and Duane Mellinger, PTA

Newest Additions to the EAPT family



East Athens Physical Therapy (EAPT) is pleased to welcome **Justin Stewart**, DPT, CSCS to our staff. Justin will be working in both the East Athens and Danielsville locations. Justin graduated from Elon University in December of 2009. Justin currently resides in Watkinsville, GA with his wife, Amanda.



Jennifer Peters, PT, ATC welcomed a new baby girl, **Anslee Joanna Peters**. Anslee was born July 27, 2010 at 7:15 a.m. She weighed 8 pounds, 11 ounces and measured 21 inches.

How Infrared Light Therapy Can Decrease Falls

For years, I have treated patients with balance deficits. They normally have either experienced a recent fall or want to decrease their risk of falling. Usually these patients would respond well with physical therapy in terms of increased range of motion and strength. However, their balance was hard to address. Many of these patients were diabetic and suffered from Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy (DPN). The areas most affected by DPN are the feet and legs. Nerve damage in the feet can result in loss of sensation. Symptoms of DPN are:

- Tingling
- Numbness
- Burning
- Pain

As a physical therapist, I struggled with DPN patients secondary to their loss of sensation. I needed something to help me increase their balance. About five years ago, I was at a conference talking to a colleague who was praising the results he was getting with his DPN patients. He introduced me to Infrared Light Therapy. This type of therapy in conjunction with range of motion and strength training has increased the independence of so many of my patients. Infrared Light Therapy is recognized by the FDA for increasing the circulation and relieving pain in patients with Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy.

My typical treatment program consists of Infrared Light Therapy along with an individualized exercise protocol. Our patients start seeing a difference quickly, usually within two weeks. I have a 6-8 week treatment protocol that focuses on range of motion, strength, and balance. Results with this protocol can be life-changing. The fear of falling can greatly influence one's independence. When a patient regains the balance required to function independently, their confidence soars to new heights.

As a physical therapist, being able to make a difference in so many lives is amazing. I love my job. When it was my turn to write an article for the newsletter, I wanted to talk about Infrared Light Therapy. Many people in the community are not aware that balance problems can be improved drastically with physical therapy and Infrared Light Therapy. If you or someone you know has a problem with balance, then give this treatment option a try. It has already improved the lives of so many of our patients.

— **Jim Mike Hinzman, PT, Cert. MDT, CSCS**

