

Screening and Evaluating Balance and Fall Risk

The assessment of balance and mobility is complex, requiring examination not only of functional performance, but of the underlying causes (body system impairments) that are responsible for balance control in function. There are standardized clinical assessments and functional measurement tools that provide this information for risk screening, treatment planning, and for outcome measurement.

A facilities use of standardized measures will directly impact reimbursement for services as CMS/Medicare institutes both Physician Quality Reporting Initiatives (PQRI)¹ for documented risk assessment and Pay for Performance (P4P) programs, where one facilities patient care outcomes will be compared to all facility outcomes to determine efficacy and payment.

A screening test triggers the need for a comprehensive balance and vestibular evaluation. This evaluation contains examination tools that investigate how a patient’s body systems are impaired in the presence or absence of pathology(s), the result of those impairments on balance and function, as well as on the patient’s ability to function in usual, desired roles.

Appendix 1: Standardized Tests and Measures

SCREENING	BALANCE EVALUATION		
PQRI Screening	Body system impairment	Functional Impact & Limitation	Participation, Personal & Environmental Factors
History of Falls or Fall Risk i.e. Risk Questionnaire TUG score, ABC Score	Sensory Orientation & Weighting (visual, vestibular, somatosensory, graviception) Biomechanical Constraints Stability Limits & Verticality (voluntary movement control) Transitions & Anticipatory Postural Adjustments (APAs) Reactive Motor Control i.e. multiple clinical tests combined; Horak BesTest; CDP/Computerized Dynamic Posturography;	Stability in Gait – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consecutive Walking Tests • Tandem Walking • Walking and Turn Tests Stability in Functional Tasks i.e. DGI, FGA, BERG	Quality of Life/Health Status Efficacy Scales (ABC, FES, etc) Home Risk Assessment

¹ PQRI information is available for physical therapists on their association website, www.APTA.org, keyword: PQRI