

Tampa Bay Times

Preventing falls

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A fall can completely upend your golden years. Instead of running around with your grandkids in the backyard, a broken hip or leg can land you in the hospital or nursing home for the foreseeable future. The process to get back on your feet and live independently again can be long and rigorous, all the while you wish you could have avoided falling in the first place.

The good news is: It's possible, especially if older Americans can get a falls risk assessment to help them identify weak spots and rebuild strength before a fall occurs. Right now, Congress is considering a bipartisan bill, the Stopping Addiction and Falls for the Elderly (SAFE) Act, that would expand access to falls-prevention services from physical and occupational therapists — the falls-prevention experts — for Medicare beneficiaries, at no cost to the patient.

As a physical therapist who helps patients regain their mobility and reduce pain every day, I am optimistic that this legislation will help prevent a good portion of the millions of falls older Americans suffer from each year.

I recently had the pleasure of hosting staff from Sen. Rick Scott's office at our clinic in Valrico to explain what the SAFE Act would mean for our patients and community. Thank you to the senator for recognizing the importance of falls risk assessments and for your commitment to improving the health of everyone in Florida.

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