



# Next Step Newsletter

Next Step  
Physical Therapy  
(516) 681- 8070

November, 2008

*Giving you information and answers to any physical therapy, health or fitness related questions*

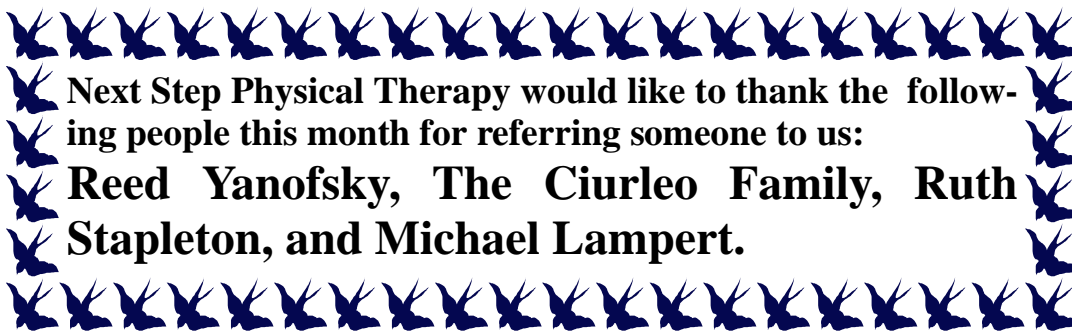
## Balance and aging

Does balance get worse with age? Often times yes! The body has three systems that contribute to balance; the visual (eyes), somatosensory (touch) and vestibular (where you are in space).

- The visual system is composed of your eyes telling your brain how your body is positioned.
- The somatosensory system is composed of sensors throughout your body but especially on the bottom of your feet that tell your brain where your body is to the surface below. That's why it is easier to walk on a solid surface like a sidewalk instead of gravel surface that will move on you.
- The vestibular system is actually deep inside of both ears. Inside each ear is an organ called the cochlea (it looks like a snail shell) that is filled with fluid. Floating in this fluid are crystals that move and change positions when you move your head. As they move they tell your brain where your head is in space. So, as you walk up that hill you were standing on earlier these crystals change positions and inform your brain that you are leaning forward.

As we age, what should be an equal contribution by all three systems often becomes lop-sided, as some systems contribute more than others. Often times the visual system contributes more, which can become a problem when it is dark out and you cannot see where you are walking. Your eyes are not contributing to your balance and therefore you feel unsteady on your feet.

So why is balance important? Well, nobody likes to fall down or feel unsteady when you walk, and with poor balance you are at increase risk for both. So what can you do about it? Plenty! You can easily incorporate balance exercises into your everyday activities. For example, as you brush your teeth at the sink think about standing with your feet next to each other or standing on one foot, without looking down. If you feel unsteady you have the sink right in front of you to regain your balance. Want some more ideas to improve your balance, just ask!



**Next Step Physical Therapy would like to thank the following people this month for referring someone to us:**

**Reed Yanofsky, The Ciurleo Family, Ruth Stapleton, and Michael Lampert.**

R.F. asks: Chris, I notice you have this young lady hanging around with you helping to treat your patients, who is she?

Excellent question! That person is me, Megan, your guest writer for this issue. I am a student from Washington University in St. Louis who has been here for a total of 3 months completing my last clinical residency with Chris at Next Step Physical Therapy. Though my lack of Southern draw may be deceiving I am from Louisville, KY (correctly pronounced as Luh-a-vul) and will be here at Next Step Physical Therapy until the 19th of December. I will return to St. Louis in January where I will complete one more semester of school and will graduate this May with my doctorate in Physical Therapy.

## Updates

**Welcome to the Next Step Newsletter!**

**Win a pair of movie tickets!!**

**The first 2 people to call us with the answer to this question wins a pair of movie tickets.**

**T or F: Name all of the systems that are responsible for balance.**

• If you have a friend or family member that you think could use our help please let us know or have them call us.

• If you would like more information on any of the topics discussed here please give us a call.

• If you have a question that you would like to have answered (maybe in the next newsletter) please don't hesitate to call.

• What topics are you interested in and would like to see in the newsletter? Let us know.

(516) 681 - 8070