



Cancer Survivorship & The Timed Up and Go Test

As a survivor of cancer, rehabilitation is crucial for managing treatment side effects and improving your quality of life. One common side effect is loss of strength and decreased balance, which can cause functional limitations. One of the ways that providers can screen for balance issues is the timed up and go test.

What is the Timed Up and Go (TUG)?

The TUG is a standardized test that has been shown to be reliable in predicting fall risk. This is a quick and simple test that is done in the clinic, that you can replicate at home for practice.

Why Is the TUG Test Important?

- Screens for fall risk and mobility issues
- Tracks your progress over time
- Helps guide your rehabilitation plan
- Predicts risk for complications and decreased independence.

Instructions for the TUG test:

- **Start Seated:** Sit in a standard height chair.
- **Stand up and walk:** Without using your hands, stand up, walk 3 meters (10 feet), turn around, and walk back.
- **Return to Sitting:** Return to the chair and sit down. Then the test is over.
- **Time yourself:** Start the timer before you stand up and stop when you are seated again.

A score of >12 seconds shows an increased risk for falls. If your time is over 12 seconds, talk to your healthcare provider for further assessment.

Exercises to work on if you scored > 12 seconds on the TUG:

1. **Sit to Stands:** Practice standing up and sitting down in a chair without using your hands, 10 times.
2. **Clamshells:** Laying on your side, keep the feet together, bend the knees, and open and close your top knee like a clam

to strengthen the hips. Repeat 30x each side.

3. **Tandem Walking:** Walk heel-to-toe in a straight line, as if on a balance beam, near a wall for support.
4. **Walking with Turns:** In a hallway or near a counter, practice walking a few steps and then turning all the way around. Use a hand on the counter if you need it for balance.
5. **Walking with Head Turns:** Walk forward while slowly turning your head left and right, challenging your balance.

Be sure to do these exercises somewhere safe and try to have a friend nearby in case you are unsteady.

Conclusion

Balance during and after cancer treatment can be challenging, but with early intervention and a comprehensive management plan, you can improve your symptoms and quality of life. Always consult with your healthcare team to tailor these strategies to your specific needs.



**International Cancer
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References: Doherty DJ, Wilson CM, Boright LE. *Oncology Rehabilitation: A Comprehensive Guidebook For Clinicians*. Elsevier: Missouri; 2023, Stubblefield MD, O'Dell MW. Synopsis of Clinical Oncology. Springer Publishing Company. 2010. ISBN: 1936287005, Lusardi MM, Fritz S, Middleton A, et al. Determining Risk of Falls in Community Dwelling Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis Using Posttest Probability. *J Geriatr Phys Ther*. 2017;40(1):1-36, Lin CC, Meardon S, O'Brien K. The Predictive Validity and Clinical Application of Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries (STeADI) for Fall Risk Screening. *Adv Geriatr Med Res*. 2022;4(3):e220008. doi:10.20900/agmr20220008

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