



« House calls save hospitals money | Main | What makes even middle school kids happy? Playing sports. »

Walking and talking simultaneously could be dangerous for seniors

Uncategorized — posted by linda shrieves on September, 22 2010 12:20 PM

Discuss This: [Comments\(0\)](#) | [Add to del.icio.us](#) | [Digg it](#)

Sure, you've heard the jokes about people who can't walk and chew gum at the same time, but a new study suggests that walking and talking at the same time may be difficult for people with Parkinson's disease — and for the elderly. That's because when they have to think and walk at the same time, they're at increased risk of falling and hurting themselves.

A new Florida State University study found that older adults with Parkinson's disease changed their gait — stride length, step velocity and the time they spent stabilizing on two feet — when asked to perform increasingly difficult verbal tasks while walking.

Even more surprising? Researchers found older adults without a neurological impairment also had trouble walking and talking.

And, by changing their gait, Parkinson's patients and the elderly are at increased risk of falls, according to the Florida State researchers.

In a study that will be published in the October issue of the International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, FSU professor Leonard L. LaPointe and co-authors Julie A.G. Stierwalt and Charles G. Maitland outline their findings.

Given their results, they suggest that caregivers and health-care professionals should ask elderly people or Parkinson's patients complicated questions when they're walking, particularly when they're descending stairs, walking in dim lighting or when they're trying to avoid obstructions.

Twenty-five individuals with Parkinson's disease — six women and 19 men — participated in the study. The mean age of participants was 67.4 years. Thirteen people who matched in age and education but without a reported history of neurological impairment made up the control group.

The researchers used the GAITRite Portable Walkway System, a 14-foot mat containing 13,824 sensors that measures, interprets and records gait data as participants walk on it. After establishing a baseline, the participants were asked to walk while completing a "low load" task, counting by ones; a "mid load" task, serial subtraction of threes; and a "high load" task, continuation of an alpha numeric sequence, such as D-7, E-8, F-9, etc.

While there were no significant differences between the two groups in stride length and step velocity, members of the control group significantly increased the time they spent stabilizing on two feet from the low load to high load tasks. The researchers theorized that the control group used the "double support time" as a compensatory strategy to gain greater control of gait and balance. The Parkinson's group did not use this strategy and therefore placed themselves at greater risk for falls, they said.

Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths, according to the Center for Disease Prevention and Control. They are also the most common cause of non-fatal-injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.

The Florida State researchers are affiliated with Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare and conducted the research at the Neurolinguistic-Neurocognitive Rehabilitation Research Center (NNRRC) at the Tallahassee Memorial Rehabilitation Center. The NNRRC is a collaboration of the Tallahassee Memorial NeuroScience Center and the Florida State University College of Medicine and the Department of Communication Science and Disorders in the College of Communication and Information.

Add a comment

Ads by Google

AARP® Medicare Supplement

Insurance Plans insured by UnitedHealthcare Ins Co. Free info

AARP-HealthCare.com

New Parkinson's Treatment

Breakthrough Stem Cell Therapy for Parkinson's Disease. Available Now!

Medra.com/Parkinsons

Comments

Post a comment

Comments are moderated. By posting a comment, you affirm that you are 13 years of age or older and you agree to our copyright and [terms of service](#).

Name: (required)

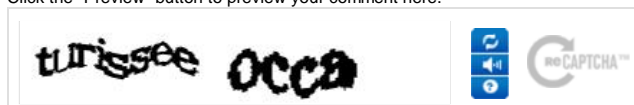
Email: (required) - Will not be published.

URL:

Comments:

Preview

Click the "Preview" button to preview your comment here.



Search

Search for:

Search



Subscribe to this blog's feed

Subscribe to our blog via email

Enter your email address

Subscribe

Delivered by **FeedBurner**

HEALTH NEWS FROM HEALTHKEY.COM

Noise pollution rattles nerves, harms health

The five-second rule on dropped food

Good news for chocolate, wine and tea lovers

Healthy snacks for energy

Diabetes and celiac disease

Flesh-colored gowns could help patients

Artificial lenses used to correct vision

Eat fish, eat well, think better

Images of food may make you feel full

Tree pose helps center body, mind

Links

Brevard County Health Department

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

County Health Department

Florida Department of Health

Health News Florida

Lake County Health Department

National Alliance on Mental Illness /Florida

Osceola County Health Department

Primary Care Access Network

Seminole County Health Department

University of Central Florida College of Medicine

Volusia County Health Department

Web MD

Popular Tags

air purification alabama allergies

Cardiovascular

CEO children

children's hospital CSPI department of health disease

Diseases **epilepsy florida**

Flu

foodborne illness free free epilepsy kit georgia health care

Heart

Hospitals House of Representatives

legislature manage men's health nemours orlando puerto

rico purple day read the bill salmonella seizure south

carolina southeast spring states swine flu wear purple

women women's health

stop spam.
read books.

Submit Comment

Recents Posts

75 percent of Americans will be overweight in 10 years, says forecast

Florida gets funds for HIV prevention, mental health

Larry the Cable Guy donates \$5 million to Orlando children's hospital

House calls save hospitals money

Walking and talking simultaneously could be dangerous for seniors

[Switch to our mobile site](#)



[Baltimore Sun](#) | [Chicago Tribune](#) | [Daily Press](#) | [Hartford Courant](#) | [LA Times](#) | [Orlando Sentinel](#) | [Sun Sentinel](#) | [The Morning Call](#) | [The Virginia Gazette](#)
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Work For Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Service](#)
Orlando Sentinel, 633 N. Orange Avenue, Orlando, FL 32801