

Falls Prevention in Older Adults

A project funded by a grant from the MN Dept. of Human Services and administered by the West Central Area Agency on Aging

Falls Preventions Grant

- Review, select and prepare educational materials
- Conduct train the trainer sessions
- Trained leaders provide community education to groups
- Increase awareness of risks and prevention measures

Falls Among Older Adults

- Leading cause of injury and institutionalization among seniors age 65+ in MN
- 2/3 of falls occur at home during typical activities of daily living



Falls by People 65+...



- Approximately 30% of community dwelling seniors age 65+ fall each year
- 50% of these seniors fall more than once

Falls by People 65+...

- Many older adults avoid activities because they fear falling
- Half of all older adults hospitalized for hip fracture can't return home or live independently



Falls by People 65+...



- Estimated national costs of \$70 billion per year in the healthcare and rehab costs
- Statistics from: www.cdc.gov/nchs/agingact.htm

Why Focus on Prevention?

- Preserve and possibly improve the quality of life for seniors
- Potential for cost-savings and long-term health care benefits

Goals of Education

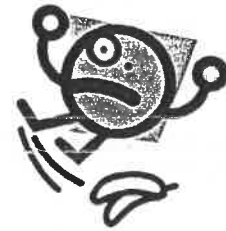
- Emphasize positive actions to decrease risk
- Increase awareness, not fear

Consequences of Falls

- **Fear of falling**
 - Restricted activity
 - Loss of confidence in mobility
- **Inactivity**
 - Muscle weakness
 - Deconditioning
 - Stiffness
- **Social isolation**
- **Increased dependency on others**

Causes of Falls

- Personal Factors
- Environmental Factors



Personal Factors

- **Physical changes that occur with aging**
 - Muscle weakness
 - Limited vision, depth perception
 - Hearing loss
 - Changes in gait
 - Balance problems
 - Delayed reaction time
 - Blood pressure changes

Personal Factors

- **Development of acute / chronic illness**
 - Increased use of medications
 - Decreased bone density
 - Blood pressure changes
 - Decreased activity level
 - Oxygen tubing
 - Incontinence
 - Pain
 - Foot problems

Environmental Factors

- Home hazards
 - Clutter
 - Scatter rugs and other tripping hazards
 - Poor lighting
 - Lack of railings and grab bars
 - Slippery surfaces
 - Frequently used items out of reach
 - Stairs

Environmental Factors

- Outdoor risk factors
 - Steps, curbs and uneven sidewalks
 - Poor lighting
 - Lack of railings
 - Gravel, ice or debris on sidewalks
 - Pets that get under foot

Intervention Strategies

- Environmental
- Personal health and fitness
- Adaptations



Environment

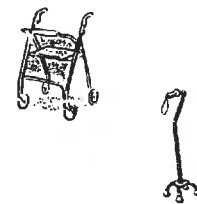
- Home Modification
 - Remove or attempt to secure scatter rugs, other tripping hazards
 - Clear path to bathroom and telephone
 - Phone on every level with emergency numbers posted
 - Install railings and grab bars
 - Minimize slippery surfaces
 - Improve overall lighting and use nightlights
 - Location of frequently used items
 - Replace furniture hard to get in and out of

Personal health and fitness

- Address medical concerns
 - Review medications and keep a current list
 - Hearing and eye exams regularly
 - Wear glasses and hearing aids
 - Limit alcohol
- Increase balance and strength
 - regular exercise
 - make position changes slowly

Adaptations

- Equipment
 - Use cane or walker
 - Shoe choice
 - Avoid ill-fitting clothing



Reducing Risk for Falling

- Identify high risk persons
 - Observation, assessment tools
- Modify internal risk factors
 - Education, intervention
- Modify environmental risk factors
 - Education, intervention
- Investigate and follow-up after a fall occurs

Tools for Assessment

- Fall history assessment
- Review of medications
- Home Safety Checklist
- Timed "Get up and go" test
- Tinetti Balance Test Performance
- Functional Reach Test
- Berg Balance Scale

Remember.....

- People are most likely to make changes that are simple and easy- Rugs, cords, night lights, etc.

Resources

- Balance assessment tools-Wild Iris Medical Education
www.therapyceu.com/RCEU
- Falls prevention video
<http://icbookstore.org/browse.cfm?catid=95>
- American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons
<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org>
- Temple University http://www.temple.edu/older_adult
- General Internet Site
www.edc.gov/neipc
- www.edc.gov/safetusa
- National Resource Center on Aging and Injury
www.nrcan.org

Referrals

- Heartbeat, b/p – M.D.
- Balance – P.T.
- Strength – P.T.
- Medication – Pharmacy
- Hearing – Audiologist
- Adaptive equipment/home mod. – O.T.

Falls Prevention in Older Adults - Post-Test

<u>True</u>	<u>False</u>	
T	F	1. Falls are the leading cause of injury and institutionalization among seniors age 65+ in MN.
T	F	2. Most falls occur when seniors are out shopping in the community.
T	F	3. Many older adults avoid activities because they fear falling.
T	F	4. The focus on falls prevention is to preserve and improve seniors quality of life.
T	F	5. Causes of falls are not related to the physical changes that occur with aging.
T	F	6. Increased use of medications, blood pressure changes, incontinence, and pain can cause increased fall risk.
T	F	7. Prevention strategies look at environment, personal health and fitness, and adaptations.
T	F	8. A home modification would be to have frequently used items out of reach.
T	F	9. It is important to investigate and follow-up after a fall occurs to reduce risk of further falls.
T	F	10. People are most likely to make changes that are simple and easy.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Preventing Slips and Falls

1. Preventing Slips and Falls With A Little Common Sense:

Accidents do happen, however, most slips and falls could and should have been prevented. The key to preventing most slips and falls are following some simple common sense tips. Take the time to identify, control and eliminate the hazards around your home to lower your chances of slips and falls.

2. Preventing Slips And Falls In The Living Room:

- Clear Clutter off the floor. (Pick up newspapers, books, shoes, toys, magazines, etc)
- Use care around low furniture. (coffee tables, ottomans, etc)
- Anchor loose telephone, computer and electrical cords.
- Secure or avoid area throw rugs. (especially those used over linoleum, wood or tile flooring, or those that curl up on the ends)
- Repair bulges in carpeting.
- Take extra care with changes in floor surface. (such as when carpet meets tile floors)

3. Preventing Slips And Falls In The Kitchen:

- Wipe up spills immediately.
- Use a sturdy step stool (not a chair), when you need to reach up into those top kitchen cupboards.
- Use reacher aids to access those high shelves.
- Organize your kitchen for easier access.
- Keep kitchen drawers and cabinets closed.
- Use a non-skid rug in front of the sink.
- Do not over wax or polish your floors.

4. Preventing Slips And Falls In The Bathroom:

- Install actual grab bars by the toilet, shower and tub. (note: towel racks, soap dishes etc. are not designed to hold a person's weight).
- Use extra care around soapy water.
- Soft-water can make showering very slippery.
- Use a shower chair and handheld showerhead if prone to falling.
- Use non-skid bath mats by the shower and sink. (they help absorb splashes)
- Use rubber mats or sloop resistant stickers in the bathtub.
- Quickly clean up puddles.

5. Preventing Slips And Falls In The Bedroom:

- Pick-up clothes, shoes or other items off the floor.
- Close your dresser drawers.
- Before getting up out of bed, always take time to sit on the edge of the bed to make sure you are not feeling light-headed or dizzy.
- Wear proper fitting clothing, you can trip over coats, pant legs or bathrobes that are too long.

6. Preventing Slips And Falls With Proper Shoes And Footwear

- Shoes and footwear should fit properly.
- Choose shoes with low heels and good tread, whenever possible.
- Soles and heels of shoes should provide good “traction” and be slip-resistant. (Note: traction is the force, measured in terms of quality of surface friction, that allows you to walk without slipping)
- Avoid shoes with shoelaces.

7. Preventing Slips And Falls While Walking:

- Slow it down, take your time.
- Don’t rush to get the front door or answer the telephone.
- Use a cane or walker if you feel unsteady.
- Keep all assistive devices in good repair. (replace worn rubber tips, etc.)
- Use care when walking on surfaces that can make it difficult to maintain your footing. (such as loose rocks, uneven floors or broken sidewalks.
- Watch where you’re walking.
- Avoid distractions, stay focused on what you’re doing.

8. Preventing Slips And Falls When It’s Slippery:

- It’s **always** extra slippery when a surface gets wet. (take care around water from sprinkler, rain ice and snow)
- Be on the lookout for stranding water that gets tracked in from outside.
- Be extra careful on any slick surface.
- Use slip-resistant products and materials. (such as non-skid throw rugs to reduce your chance of slipping on linoleum)

9. Preventing Slips And Falls On Stairs And Steps:

- Always keep steps and staircases clear.
- Keep stairwells well-lit.
- Install sturdy handrails on both sides, if you can.
- Add non-slip safety treads to steps.
- Always keep one hand free to be able to use the handrail.
- Never carry items that obstruct your view of the next step.
- Don't overload yourself. (instead: carry smaller, lighter loads and or make extra trips)
- Take your time to decrease chances of misjudging a step.

10. Preventing Slips And Falls In The Garage:

- Clean up those greasy, oily, or muddy floors.
- Clean and organize the clutter. (it's easy to trip over a misplaced object in storage areas)
- Never use a "make-shift" ladder in place of a real ladder. (note: chairs, boxes, barrels, etc. should never be used as substitutes for a true sturdy ladder).
- Take extra care when climbing up to high places.
- Take extra care when reaching out your arms or overextending your reach, especially on a ladder.

11. Preventing Slips And Falls With Better Vision And Light:

- Turn on the lights! (you can easily miss an unknown object lurking in the darkness)
- Use nightlights.
- Wear your glasses if you need them.
- Have your vision checked regularly by an eye doctor. (you may have vision changes and or problems such as cataracts)
- Don't wear sunglasses indoors.
- Give your eyes a chance to adjust. (going from light to dark areas, or vice versa, can cause temporary vision problems)

12. Preventing Slips And Falls With Young Children:

- Keep young children supervised at all times, obvious dangers are not always apparent to children.
- Don't let children climb onto furniture. (including: tables, countertops, etc.)
- Always properly strap children into highchairs, shopping carts and strollers.
- Keep play time away from windows, sliding patio doors, porches, balconies and other dangerous areas.
- Use safety gates.

13. Preventing Slips And Falls Around Your Pets:

- Smaller pets can get under your feet, causing you to trip on or over them.
- Larger pets can jump on you, knocking you off balance.

14. Preventing Slips And Falls With Exercise:

It's easy to become less active or more sedentary because of the pain, fatigue, and other limitations of arthritis. Lack of exercise leads to weakness, whereas, exercise improves strength and balance, builds coordination, and helps you feel better. Ask your doctor or physical therapist which type of exercise is best for you. Types of arthritis-friendly exercise include:

- Cycling
- Running
- Tai Chi
- Walking
- Water Exercise
- Yoga

Tips:

1. Consider Using assistive devices, mobility aids, and other helpful gadgets. The limitations of arthritis can make tasks challenging and frustrating. Remember, there are products that can help
2. Follow your medication dosages closely. Review your medications (including supplements and other products you take over the counter) with your doctor. Certain medications, or combination of medications can lead to dizziness, drowsiness, light-headedness, weakness and other side effects that could lead to slips and falls.