

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Home Accident Prevention

Falls among adults aged 65 and older are common, costly, and preventable. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death among adults ages 65 and older, and the fall death rate is increasing.

Every second of every day an older adult falls. Every year more than one in four older adults reported falling and about 41,000 older adults die as a result of a fall—that's 112 older adults every day.

The causes of falls are known as *risk factors*. Although no single risk factor causes all falls, the greater the number of risk factors, the greater the probability of a fall and the more likely the fall will threaten personal independence.

Some people believe that falls are a normal part of aging, and as such are not preventable. But many risk factors *are* preventable. As obvious as it may sound, a lack of knowledge about risk factors and how to prevent them contributes to many falls. While some risk factors for falls, such as heredity and age, cannot be changed, several risk factors can be eliminated or reduced.

Source: CDC

Alcohol Affects Safety

Drinking even a small amount of alcohol can lead to dangerous or even deadly situations because it can impair a person's judgment, coordination, and reaction time. This increases the risk of falls.

Alcohol is a factor in about 65% of fatal falls. In seniors, especially, too much alcohol can lead to balance problems and falls, which can result in hip or arm fractures and other injuries. Older people have thinner bones than younger people, so their bones break more easily. Studies show that the rate of various types of fractures in older adults increases with heavy alcohol use.

Source: National Institute on Aging

Why Do Seniors Fall?

Failure to exercise regularly results in poor muscle tone, decreased bone mass, loss of balance and reduced flexibility.

Impaired vision, including age-related vision diseases, as well as not wearing glasses that have been prescribed.

Medications, like sedatives, anti-depressants, and anti-psychotic drugs, plus taking multiple medications, increase the risk of falling.

Health conditions, such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and arthritis cause weakness in the extremities, poor grip strength, balance disorders and cognitive impairment.

Hip replacements and other surgeries leave an elderly person weak, in pain and discomfort and less mobile than they were before the surgery.

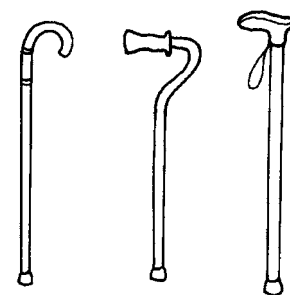
Environmental hazards, such as poor lighting and loose carpets.



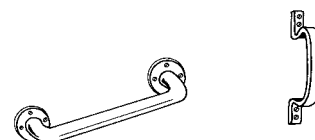
Focus on Fall Prevention

An 85-year-old needs about three times the amount of light a 15-year-old needs to see the same thing. Contrasting colors play a big part in seeing well. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be *different* from the floor color. Remove all hazards that might lead to tripping.

- ✓ **Clear clutter.** Remove debris, loose cords, slippery rugs.
- ✓ **Don't move furniture unnecessarily.** Some frail seniors hold onto furniture or other items while moving through the home. Until canes or walkers are introduced, keep everything securely in place.
- ✓ **Install safety bars, grab bars or handrails** in the shower or bath.
- ✓ Put **non-slip stickers** or tape on the tub/shower floor.
- ✓ Use a **stool riser seat** to make getting on and off the toilet easier.
- ✓ Make sure stairs are sturdy with **strong hand railings**. Keep **stairwells well-lit**.
- ✓ **Increase lighting levels** in the home to aid vision.
- ✓ **Tack rugs down** to the floor, especially those near the top of or on stairs.
- ✓ Remove **unnecessary furniture**.
- ✓ **Tape down electrical cords** to baseboards or put them behind furniture.
- ✓ Insist on **non-slip shoes or slippers**. Properly fitted, low-heeled, non-slip footwear is much safer than going barefoot. Avoid slippers that can easily slip on and off.
- ✓ Use **fall mats, cushioned floor pads**, 1 or 2 inches thick with beveled edges. They cushion the fall and prevent injuries; they're especially useful in bathrooms or beside the bed, where falls occur most frequently.
- ✓ Encourage the use of **canes and walkers**. Make sure the mobility device you choose is the correct height for the person and has a rubber tip or other traction on the bottom.
- ✓ Use **motion-sensitive lights** that come on when a person enters a room or use night lights in every room.
- ✓ Keep frequently used items in **easy-to-reach cabinets**. Use a **grasping tool** to get at out-of-reach items, rather than a chair or stepladder. **Wipe spills** immediately.



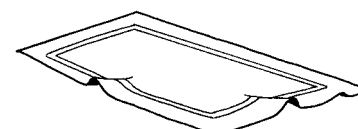
Canes



Handles



Reacher



Loose carpet

Source: *The Comfort of Home: A Complete Guide for Caregivers*

Taking Care of Yourself— Be Optimistic

It is easy to get down when you have many responsibilities that you never expected. However, there are things you can do to create an optimistic life.

- ◆ *Do not become attached to negative thoughts.*
- ◆ *Do not live in the past. Let it go.*
- ◆ *Keep your ties with your family and loving, supportive friends.*

Be sure to take the time to reach out to them.

- ◆ *Make time for fun in your life.*
- ◆ *Make time to be quiet and still for a few minutes each day to seek inner guidance and connect to a higher purpose.*

When you feel stressed, remember two times in your life when you felt inner peace. Where were you? Why were you feeling good? Capture that feeling again.



Live Life Laughing!

Now that I'm older, everything's finally starting to click for me. My back, my knees, my neck ...



Inspiration

Try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud.

—Maya Angelou

Memory Care - Falls

People with Alzheimer's are at particularly high risk of falling. Problems with vision, perception and balance increase as Alzheimer's advances, making the risk of a fall more likely.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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SAFETY TIPS— Dehydration & Activity

Dehydration is a very common cause of falls in older adults. It can cause dizziness and a drop in blood pressure, which can increase the risk of falling over. If the person in your care experiences incontinence, find ways to build their confidence around having a drink. This could be by encouraging them to drink just little and often throughout the day, so that they are less likely to urgently need the toilet after a big drink. To reduce the likelihood of falls at night, stop drinking liquids earlier in the evening.

Regular physical activity is a first line of defense against falls and fractures. Physical activity strengthens muscles and increases flexibility and endurance. In turn, your balance and the way you walk may change, decreasing the chances of a fall. It's important to keep muscles strong. Strengthening muscles in the lower body can improve balance. Work with your doctor or a physical therapist to plan a physical activity program that is right for the person in your care.

NEXT ISSUE...ELDER ABUSE - THE ROLE OF DRUGS

Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

To be safe, after age 50 people should have their eyes examined every one to two years to screen for vision problems. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Although no single risk factor causes all falls, the greater the number of risk factors, the greater the probability of a fall and the more likely the fall will threaten personal independence.
T F
2. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be *different* from the floor color.
T F
3. An 85-year-old needs about three times the amount of light a 15-year-old needs to see the same thing.
T F
4. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death among adults ages 65 and older, and the fall death rate is increasing.
T F
5. Medications, like sedatives, anti-depressants, and anti-psychotic drugs, plus taking multiple medications, increase the risk of falling.
T F
6. Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and arthritis do not contribute to falls.
T F
7. Some frail seniors hold onto furniture or other items while moving through the home so until canes or walkers are introduced, keep everything securely in place.
T F
8. Lighting does not affect whether a person might fall.
T F
9. Encourage the use of canes and walkers. Make sure the mobility device you choose is the correct height and has a rubber tip or other traction on the bottom.
T F
10. Dehydration is a very common cause of falls in older adults.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____