

# Facts About Falling

## Falling

Falling is a significant problem for the elderly. Many elderly people have weak bones from osteoporosis, for example, that can spontaneously break and result in a fall.

Falls are a risk for a large segment of people around the country, both in homes as well as in the healthcare setting. Sometimes, falls are simply not preventable. However, certain interventions can be taken, depending on the individuals, which will maintain a degree of independence and quality of life desired by the resident and his or her family.

## Risk factors

Many elderly people are at risk for falling because of serious medical problems, decreased appetite and decreased mobility.

Some risk factors for falling include:

- Previous falls
- Problems with mobility and walking
- Fear of falling
- Irregular heartbeat
- Blood pressure that drops significantly upon standing
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Problems with seeing or hearing
- Multiple medications (including water pills)
- Inappropriate footwear
- Susceptibility to fractures which may result in a fall

## Effects of Aging

Various age-related reasons that may cause falls include:

- Reduced ability to stand up straight
- Decreased knowledge of where their legs are in relation to the ground
- Poor sight in dim lighting
- Weak bones
- Age-related cardiac changes
- Neurological diseases such as Parkinson's Disease, stroke and dementia

## What if someone falls

The staff will try to minimize the risk of your family member falling. If your loved one should fall, one or more of the following may be conducted by the nurses:

1. A post-fall assessment
2. Check for environmental factors that could have caused or contributed to the fall
3. Notify you and your loved one's physician

## Falls and restraints

If your loved one fell at home it may not be possible to prevent all falls in the care center. Some families request that we use restraints for persons who fall.

For most residents, restraint use is not an effective solution as it may cause additional problems. Persons in restraints usually experience more serious injuries when they do fall. Often their efforts to release themselves from the restraint result in a fall with injuries.

## What you can do to help

- Tell us if your loved one fell at home and what you did to prevent them from falling again.
- Tell us about your loved one's previous rest and activity pattern.
- Discuss with us the importance of your loved one's independence versus fall risks.
- Assist us in orienting your loved one to his or her environment.
- Make sure that your loved one has his or her eyeglasses.
- Explain use of the call light to your loved one and leave it within reach.
- Provide non-slip, well-structured shoes.

- Bring in clothing that is easy to remove for toileting.
- Do not bring in extension cords for use in your loved one's room.
- Do not attempt to transfer your loved one by yourself. Inform a nurse when assistance is needed.
- After a visit, make sure furniture is returned to its usual position and that walkways to the bathroom and to the door are free from objects.
- Provide us with accurate telephone numbers for family members or responsible parties.

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