

Tribute
Home Care



Take a Stand Against Falls

*Preventative Action Plan for
Families and Care Teams*

Take a Stand Against Falls

Falls are a serious health risk for seniors. Falls are a leading cause of emergency room visits for seniors, and the emotional effects of a fall can be debilitating for seniors, their families and all who care for them.

The good news is that falls can be prevented with some planning. It all starts with a good plan. Implementing a plan with a combination of measures and some early evaluations can help maintain a quality of life. This guide will help you take a stand against falls in your home or community. You'll learn what causes of falls, the preventative actions you can take, and different ways you can access the risk.

- ***Facts About Falls***

It's unfortunate that falls are a common occurrence, especially among seniors. Research indicates that a majority of falls experienced by seniors take place in their own homes, primarily in the bedroom and bathroom areas.

According to the CDC, there are more than 36 million reported senior falls annually, with one out of every five incidents resulting in a head injury or broken bone. Falls are also responsible for 95% of hip injuries. For seniors with dementia, the risk of falling is even greater, with a 70-80% incidence of fractures sustained from falls.

- ***Fear of Falling***

After experiencing a fall, seniors may develop a fear of falling again, which can greatly affect their quality of life, even if they were not injured. This fear can cause a loss of confidence, depression, and lead to isolation as they avoid activities and social events.

Once a fall occurs, seniors may need to take extra precautions. If they live in an assisted living community, they may be designated as a "fall risk" and require additional care and limitations on their independence.

- ***Falls Can Be Prevented***

As we age, falls shouldn't be considered a routine occurrence. There are various measures that can be taken to minimize the likelihood of a fall, beginning with devising a plan.

The initial move is to identify what triggers a fall. Falls can be a result of both intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) factors. Since both are interlinked, it's essential to address them with equal effort as part of a comprehensive plan.

- ***Intrinsic Factors: Prevention Checklist***

Factors related to one's health and physical condition can contribute to falls. To address these intrinsic factors, it is recommended to take certain actions. However, it is important to consult with a medical professional before starting any exercise program or making changes to medications.



Keep Moving

Incorporating physical activities such as walking, water workouts, and tai chi into one's routine can greatly improve strength, balance, coordination, and flexibility. According to the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, regular exercise can reduce the rate of falls by 23% and the number of people who fall by 15%. To achieve long-term benefits, it is important to choose activities that are enjoyable and can be easily incorporated into daily life.



Stay Mentally Active

Maintaining cognitive abilities is crucial in preventing falls and ensuring balance. Seniors who are attentive to their surroundings are able to avoid distractions, and they are better equipped to respond to unexpected changes in their environment. Engaging in mind-body exercises such as tai chi, yoga, and dance has been shown to enhance mental agility.



Review Medications

It's not uncommon for medication to have side effects that include drowsiness, dizziness, or muscle weakness. Talk to a doctor about the potential for side effect for current and any new medications. Always take medications exactly as they are prescribed by a doctor.

• *Extrinsic Factors: Prevention Checklist*

Let's discuss the external factors that affect the safety of seniors and explore various measures to make their living environment safer. While some of these measures may seem obvious, conducting a regular home environment audit is crucial to ensure that no aspect of safety is overlooked due to the complexity of the living area.



Clear the Clutter

To ensure safety, it is important to keep all walkways clear of any obstacles such as coffee tables, boxes, and plant stands. Additionally, be vigilant for boxes and extension cords which may find their way into high-traffic areas.



Make Repairs Promptly

It's important to address loose floorboards, railings, or bunched-up carpeting promptly to avoid potential hazards. Additionally, any spilled liquids in the kitchen should be cleaned up immediately to prevent accidents.



Non-Slip Mats

Bathroom accidents can be prevented by using nonslip mats in showers and bathtubs. To further ensure safety, it's advisable to use a bath seat as a secure sitting area while taking a shower. This way, one can enjoy a relaxing shower without the fear of slipping or falling.



Secure Rugs

To prevent area rugs from slipping, it's advisable to use double-sided tape, carpet tacks, or slip-resistant backing. Alternatively, if you feel that the risk isn't worth it, you may want to consider removing them from your home altogether.



Easy-to-Reach Day-to-Day Items

It's important to remember the essential items required for daily use such as clothing, dishes, and food, and ensure that they are stored in easily accessible locations.



Good Lighting

To prevent tripping on hard-to-see objects, it's important to keep your home well-lit. Consider placing a lamp within easy reach of the bed and add nightlights in bedrooms, bathrooms, and hallways. If you have older light switches, they can be replaced with illuminated or glow-in-the-dark switches for improved visibility.



Handrails

Install handrails on both sides of the stairs and in the bathroom for added safety. While bathroom towel bars may seem convenient to grab hold of, they are not sturdy enough and can easily break away when pulled. Instead, it's recommended to install grab bars near the toilet, inside the shower stall, or just above the bathtub for added support and assistance.



Prepare Stairs

If you have a wood staircase, it is important that they have treads in order to prevent slipping. It's also helpful to distinguish between each step, as it can be difficult for aging eyes to differentiate between them. One option is to paint the edges of the stairs or use reflective safety tape for added visibility and safety.



Clear Stairs

It is important to consistently monitor and communicate with guests to ensure safety. Objects such as toys, clothing, or boxes left on or near stairways can pose a risk for falls.

Once you've taken the necessary safety measures, there are a handful of actions you can take to assist the elderly in navigating their surroundings with greater ease.



Assistive Devices

Using a cane or walker are easy ways to assist seniors in maintaining their balance and stability.



Sensible Shoes

Making a change in footwear can have a significant impact on one's safety at home. Say goodbye to high heels, floppy slippers, and stocking feet, and opt for well-fitted flat shoes with non-skid soles. They can not only prevent accidental falls but they might help alleviate joint pain.

- ***5 Methods to Evaluate the Risk of Falling***

Determining the level of assistance required by an individual can be challenging. However, there are several uncomplicated tests that can be performed to assess their likelihood of falling.

30-Second Chair Stand Test

Here's a quick assessment to measure leg strength and endurance. Set a timer for 30 seconds and count how many times someone can stand up from a seated position without using their hands for support.

The CDC provides a chart that outlines what score should be considered below average, which suggests a high risk of falling. The score varies by age and gender. For instance, if a woman in her 70s completes this test less than 10 times, she's considered to have a high risk of falling.

See the CDC chart of scores by gender and age at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI-Assessment-30Sec-508.pdf>.

Timed Up and Go Test (TUG)

The TUG test evaluates an individual's ability to stand up from a seated position and walk ten feet at their regular pace. Completing this task in more than 12 seconds indicates an increased risk of falling.

4-Stage Balance Test

The purpose of this evaluation is to measure static balance, which refers to the ability to maintain balance while standing still. The test involves holding four different challenging positions for a minimum of ten seconds each. If an individual struggles to hold the final stance for the required time, they may be at a greater risk of falling.

The CDC illustrates the positions on this summary:
https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/4-Stage_Balance_Test-print.pdf

Orthostatic Blood Pressure Test

Doctors use the orthostatic blood pressure test to diagnose orthostatic hypotension, a sudden drop in blood pressure when a person stands up.

The test includes three blood pressure readings: the first one taken after the individual has been lying down for five minutes, the second one after one minute of standing up, and the third one after three minutes of standing.

Allen Cognitive Screen

This assessment, known as the "leather lacing tool," evaluates fall risks associated with functional cognition. A skilled professional prompts the person to sew three progressively challenging stitches through pre-punched holes in a leather sample.

The individual's performance is evaluated based on the Allen Cognitive Levels and Modes of Performance.

You can watch a brief video on how this test is administered:
<https://youtu.be/RKJLfjPw7A>

- ***Responding to a Fall***

Residential communities often have established procedures for addressing falls, which should always be followed. The following guidelines are meant to serve as general advice for anyone.

If an elderly person falls, it's important to give them a moment to try and get up on their own. Be reassuring and help them stay calm.

Call an Ambulance if There's an Injury

Check for injuries by looking for bruising, skin discoloration, or signs of a broken bone. If the person is in visible pain, seek medical attention immediately. Keep them lying down and calm until help arrives.

If No Injury, Encourage Them to Stand

If there are no obvious signs of injury, offer to help them stand up but don't do it for them. Stay close and ready to assist if needed. If they struggle to stand on their own, they should see a doctor that day.

Assess the Environment

After ensuring the individual is okay or receiving medical care, it's important to assess the situation. Determine what caused the fall to prevent it from happening again.

Assess the environment and document any details such as lighting, obstructions, and assistive devices used. Collecting this information can assist families and care teams in resolving issues and better preparing for the future.

Tribute

Home Care

- *Take a Stand Against Falls with Tribute*

Our Tribute Caregivers and Client Services teams are trained to assist you in creating a safe home environment that can prevent falls. We conduct an audit of the home environment and provide recommendations to make it safer.

For those who are at risk of falling, we create a personalized care plan that addresses their needs and includes all necessary precautions to ensure their safety.

Our Caregivers spend a significant amount of time with clients throughout the day, so they are in the best position to monitor changes in behavior, ensure medication adherence, and ensure that the care plan is followed precisely.



Tribute Caregivers are selected for their ability to build strong relationships with people. They provide care that uplifts spirits with love, optimism, and joy. When clients receive both physical and emotional support, they can live more fulfilling lives. Experience the remarkable care that our Caregivers can provide for your clients and family members.

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