

Fall Risk



Description:

Each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older falls; unintentional falls are the leading cause of death by injury and the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for this age group.

Symptoms and Conditions:

Though falls are generally a risk for seniors, the risk increases for those with conditions that limit mobility such as Parkinson's disease and recovery from orthopedic surgery or a fracture.

Factors that influence fall risk include:

- Level of consciousness/mental status
- History of falls in the past 3 months
- Ability to ambulate
- Vision status
- Gait and balance
- Orthostatic changes (changes in BP and cardiac rhythm between lying and standing)
- Current or recent use of 1 or more of the following medications: anesthetics, anti-histamines, cathartics, diuretics, anti-hypertensives, anti-seizure, benzodiazepines, hypoglycemics, psychotropics, sedatives
- Presence of a 1 or more pre-disposing conditions: hypertension, vertigo, Parkinson's disease, loss of limb(s), CVA(stroke), seizures, arthritis, osteoporosis, fractures
- Equipment/assistive device needs (e.g. cane, walker, oxygen)



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Caregiver Tips:

- **Assist with balance/mobility.** Supervise and aid as needed with ADLs and IADLs such as bathing, dressing, hygiene, getting in and out of bed, meal prep, and transportation. When walking outside or on tiled or wood floors, ensure client is wearing sturdy shoes and have a cane available for added support if needed. Never allow your client to stand on chairs, tables or surfaces on wheels. If using a ladder make sure you have three points of contact - eg. two feet and one hand.
- **Regular exercises.** Seniors who stay physically active improve balance, flexibility and strength. Exercise is also known to reduce stress and depression, improving mental well-being. If applicable, work with your client's physical and occupational therapists to aid in practicing range of motion and muscle strengthening exercises. Massage or help your client perform stretches often to increase flexibility, as recommended by a doctor.
- **Ensure home safety.**
 - Make sure there is sufficient lighting in every room and hallway. Put bright tape on the steps to alert your client to a change in surface.
 - Clean up spills immediately.
 - Do not allow your client to walk on freshly mopped floors.
 - Confirm all handrails are firmly secure both inside and outside the home.
 - Reduce tripping hazards by checking that all rugs are secured under furniture and no furniture or electrical cords are blocking walking areas.
 - Ensure there is room for assistive devices such as walkers in walkways.
 - Check outdoor walkways for potential tripping hazards.
 - Remove small throw rugs.
 - Discuss adding grab bars or shower benches with your client's family.
- **Monitor vision changes.** If your client mentions vision problems or finds his/her glasses aren't as helpful anymore, discuss visiting the ophthalmologist to ensure the highest vision quality.
- **Equipment assist.** Encourage use of assistive devices when your client is getting up from a chair or bed. Take special precautions when assisting with transferring your client. Use a gait belt if your client is prone to falling or is not stable on his/her feet. This will help you ease him/her to the floor if he/she does begin to fall.
- **Maintain your safety.** Wear a back brace if your client requires heavy assist and transfer. Your safety is paramount and keeping your body healthy will allow you to provide the best care for your client.