

# CARE FOR U PLUS

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## Fall Prevention

Falls are a serious problem among older adults. At least one third of community-dwelling individuals older than age 65 and one-half of those aged 80 and older fall each year. Falling is the leading cause of injury death in women of any age and men over age 85. Approximately 10% of all falls result in a fracture, and an additional 5-11% result in other serious injuries. 95% of hip fractures are caused by falls and approximately half of all older adults who are hospitalized for hip fractures are not able to return home or live independently. Falls are a contributing factor in 40% of nursing home admissions in the United States.

### Definitions:

- **Fall:** An unintentional change in position resulting in coming to rest on the ground or at a lower level.
- **Fall Prevention:** Identify patients at risk of falling and plan interventions to assist prevention of falling in an effort to reduce hospitalizations.

### Risk Assessment Tool:

The risk assessment tool is a special assessment completed by RN for every client at the start of care and follow-up visits to determine those patients who are high risk for falling.

### Common Environmental Factors that Lead to Falls:

- **Glare or too much light**
  - Use lampshades or frosted bulbs to reduce glare.
  - Pull shades/close blinds or curtains to reduce glare from windows.
- **Not enough light:** Older adults sometimes need brighter lights to see well.
  - Improve the lighting in the home by turning on lights during day if natural lighting is low.
- **Home hazards:** Most falls in the home occur in bathrooms, bedrooms and on the stairs. Store things that the client uses frequently where the client can reach them easily.
  - Bathroom
    - Encourage the client to use the grab bars in the shower, tub and toilet areas.
    - Use bathmats with suction cups/nonskid adhesive strips in the shower or tub.
    - Encourage the client to sit on a bench or stool in the shower.
    - Encourage the client to use an elevated toilet seat.
  - Bedroom
    - Use a nightlight in the bedroom.
    - Encourage the client to use a bedside commode at night. Keep it close to the bed.
    - Have a lamp or light switch that the client can reach without getting out of bed.
  - Stairs
    - Have handrails on both sides of stairs.
    - Make certain that carpets are firmly attached to stairs.

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- Paint the edges of steps that are narrow or are higher or lower than the rest
- Obstacles in pathways
  - Remove unnecessary clutter/rearrange furniture to allow clear pathways
  - Keep telephone, electrical cords and oxygen tubing out of pathways
- Uneven, turns, loose, frayed carpeting
  - Tack rugs and glue vinyl flooring so they lie flat
  - Remove or replace rugs or runners that tend to slip
  - Attach nonskid backing to loosen rugs
  - Use double-sided tape to keep rugs from slipping
- **Patient factors that lead to falls:** Sensory changes can make older adults more prone to falls. Diabetes can affect the sensation in feet. Inner ear problems can affect balance. Vision problems make it difficult to see potential hazards.
  - Encourage the client to use hearing aids and glasses if needed
  - Encourage the client to wear appropriate footwear
  - Discourage the client from walking around in stockings or bare feet
- **Normal aging:** As a result of normal aging, many older adults have a gradual decrease in muscle strength, endurance, and coordination. They also have less foot and toe lift during stepping. Physical activity can help.
  - Exercise regularly to improve muscle flexibility and strength
  - Encourage the client to use your helping devices, such as a cane, walker, reacher, etc.
- **Medications (more than 5):** Some drugs, even over-the-counter medications, can cause drowsiness, dizziness, and unsteady gait.
  - Report symptoms to your Nursing Supervisor immediately
  - Watch for alcohol intake as it may cause unsteadiness and increase the chance of harmful drug interactions.
- **Getting up quickly/rushing (to answer phone, etc.):** If the client feels dizzy or light-headed or has the balance problems.
  - Ask client to sit down or stay seated until the head clears
  - Ask client to stand up slowly to avoid unsteadiness
  - Report the symptoms to your Nursing

## Fall Prevention:

- Observe for and notify manager of possible risk factors for falls.
- Report witnessed, un-witnessed, and near falls to clinicians and managers.
- Report home safety hazards such as poor lighting and throw rugs.
- Encourage patient and caregiver to use walker or cane, if patient has a device.
- Use and encourage family to use gait belts when patient's gait (walking) is unsteady. (Gait belts provide a secure and safe hand hold for caregivers and staff when transferring or walking patients)
- Ensure proper use of adaptive equipment in bathrooms.
- Remind patients to wear glasses and hearing aids.
- Remind patients to exercise regularly, as ordered.