



FALL RISK & PREVENTION

STATISTICS

- Each year, 1 out of 3 adults ages 65 and older will fall
- Falls are the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions in adults age 65 and older
- 20-30% of individuals who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries such as lacerations, hip fractures, and traumatic head injuries. These injuries increase the risk of early death.
- Even if they do not suffer an injury, many people who fall develop a fear of falling. This may cause them to limit activities, which can lead to decreased mobility. In turn, this can actually increase their risk of falling.

WHAT IS BALANCE?

- The ability to maintain the body's center of mass over its base of support.
- Allows the individual to: see clearly while moving, maintain orientation in respect to gravity, determine direction and speed of movement, make automatic postural adjustments to maintain posture and stability.

HOW DOES BALANCE WORK?

- Sensory input from: vision, proprioception, vestibular system
- Integration of sensory input in the brain
- Motor output to the eyes and muscles

RISK FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FALLS (MAINLY IN THE OLDER ADULT)

- Increased age
- Gait instability and slower walking speed
- Decreased strength and range of motion
- Impaired balance and mobility and/or poor coordination
- Visual and auditory impairments
- Decreased sensation in extremities
- Depression
- Incontinence
- Confusion
- Environmental hazards
- Taking more than 4 medications
- Dizziness/vertigo

HOW TO PREVENT FALLS

- **Get your hearing checked regularly**

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L I F E R E B A L A N C E D

- If you use hearing aids, wear them and have them checked regularly
- Adequate hearing allows you to be more aware of your surroundings
- **Get your vision checked regularly**
 - If you need glasses, wear them!
 - Ensure adequate lighting both inside and outside the home
 - Use night lights in all rooms
 - If you go out and will be returning after dark, leave a light on
 - Carry a small flashlight so you can see to unlock doors
- **Keep your bones strong**
 - Have your bone density monitored and if needed, get treated for osteoporosis
 - Take calcium and vitamin D supplements if advised by your physician
 - Participate in weight bearing exercise regularly
- **Ensure your home is safe!**
 - Remove throw rugs and clear obstacles and clutter from the floor
 - Install railings on the stairs and grab bars in the bathrooms and make sure they are secured to the wall
 - Avoid wet spots, especially rain and ice
 - Wear sturdy footwear that provides good contact with the floor. Avoid wearing flip flops or slip on shoes
 - Keep frequently used items within easy reach
- **Have your medications checked**
 - Ask your physician or pharmacist to review your current medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, to reduce side effects and potential interactions that may cause dizziness or drowsiness
 - Avoid using alcohol with medication
 - Keep an updated list of medications with you
 - Avoid self-medicating!
- **Stay active and social!**
 - Exercise regularly and participate in activities that focus on strength and balance
 - Walk everyday
 - Don't be afraid to discuss a fall with your healthcare provider
 - Be with other people and remember that humor can be the best form of medicine!

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