

# Falls in Older Adults: Prevention is the Key

## Facts On Falls

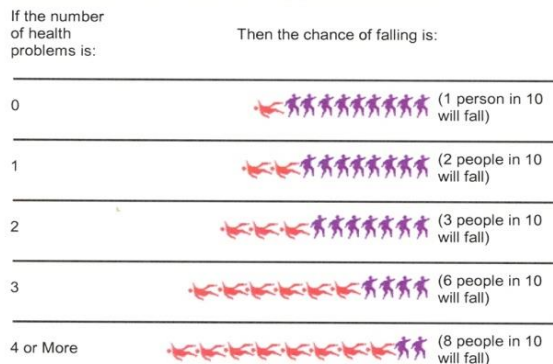
**1/3** of community dwellers > 65 fall each year

**1/2** of those who have fallen will fall again

**1/6** of nursing home residents will fall each year

## Risk for Falls in Older Adults

**Risk Factors for Falls:** Difficulty walking, 4 or more medications, foot problems, unsafe footwear, dizziness/orthostasis, visual problems, unsafe home environment.



Adapted with permission from Tinetti (2009).

## Outcomes of Falls

- Hip fracture
- Head injury
- Soft tissue injury
- Lacerations
- Other (i.e. vertebral or Colles fractures)
- Pain
- Fear of falling
- Decreased activity and functional decline
- Cost may be up to \$55 billion annually by 2020

## What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

### In the Office

Patients don't tell. American Geriatrics Society Guidelines and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend you ask patients:

- Ask about falls annually
- Ask about frequency and circumstances of falls
- Ask about feeling unsteady
- Ask if patients worry about falling

Those with a fall or concerns need a multi-factorial fall risk assessment:

- Focused history
- Medication review
- Physical exam including strength, balance, mobility, neurological function, muscle strength, feet and footwear
- Orthostatic hypotension
- Vision
- Functional Assessment activity/fear of falling/curtailing activity
- Home safety assessment



### In the hospital or Long-term Care

- Assess patients for fall risks
- Individualize a plan of care to address risks + communicate to team
- Encourage activity levels and exercise as to prevent decline
- Make sure the older adult has their glasses, hearing aids, and walking aids
- Refer to therapy if needed to evaluate walking, balance and activities of daily living
- Identify dementia and delirium and monitor frequently
- Make regular bathroom rounds
- Check environment and bathroom for fall risks

Information on fall prevention for patients and clinicians are available from the CDC: **STEADI Toolkit** (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths and Injuries) – <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/materials.html#tabs-1205242-4>

### General Fall Prevention

Exercise – should include muscle strengthening, flexibility and balance training. Refer patients to evidence-based fall prevention programs -- Matter of Balance, Stepping On, T'ai Chi, OTAGO

Physical therapy for those with a gait/balance problem

Appropriate use of assistive devices – walker or cane

Annual vision checks and correction as needed

Blood pressure checks for postural hypotension

Vitamin D supplementation as needed

Use a Home Safety Checklist to assess home for risks

Check if your state has a Fall Prevention Coalition. Missouri - <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/seniors/showmefallsfreemissouri/>