

Worksheet:

Decreasing the Risk of Falling

► Falls are one of the major threats to the safety and independence of older adults.

Introduction

Falls are one of the most significant threats to the safety and independence of older adults. Between 2009 and 2018, there was a 30 percent increase in the death rate of adults 65 and older adults due to falls in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, adults 85 and older make up the fastest growing population among fall death rates. Falls are a significant health issue that impacts the lives of older adults physically, mentally, socially, and economically.

Many older adults are becoming less active due to their fear of falling. Such fear can lead to social isolation and depression. An increased awareness of the risks of falls and how to prevent them can help older adults maintain their independence as well as improve their quality of life. While falling can happen to anyone, older adults must get to know the various risk factors that increase their chances of falling.

How to Reduce Your Risk of Falling

Biological Changes in the Body

- Illnesses (Bowel/Bladder Incontinence, Stroke, Parkinson, etc.)
- Fear of falling
- Poor eyesight
- Problem with feet
- Disease (physical abilities impaired – stroke, Parkinson, bladder, etc.)
- Poor balance
- Weakened muscles

Reduce Indoor Environmental Risks

- Remove trip hazards such as clutter, spills, electrical cords, pets, etc. from floors and stairs.
- Secure corner of rugs to prevent ends from rolling.
- Use area and throw rugs with non-slip bottoms.
- Use contrasting tips of opposing colors on stairs or steps.



Figure 1. Older adult woman on the stairs. iStock Photo credit: AND-ONE

- Use bright lighting throughout the house.
- Avoid waxing or polishing floors.
- Use night lights.
- Mount rail on side of bed (bed rails).
- Mount grab bars on wall in or near shower, tub, and toilet.
- Mount rails on both sides of stairs.
- Use a raised toilet seat (with or without arms/bars).
- Use non-skid bath mat beside tub/shower to absorb water.
- Place a non-slip rubber mat or strips on bottom of tub.
- Install a shower chair.
- Have a handheld shower head available.
- Mount liquid soap dispenser near tub or shower.
- Avoid taking a bath in a deep bath tub when weak or frail.
- Participate in programs to improve poor balance
- Actively participate in programs and activities that strengthen muscles

Decisions/Choices that Can Reduce Risk Factors

- Wear properly fitting clothes and shoes at all times that do not limit your movement.
- Rise slowly from chair, sofa or bed.
- Keep a portable phone with you at all times.
- Avoid using several prescribed or over-the-counter medications that could have negative side effects.
- Accept that your body is changing and that your movement may be limited as you grow older.

WORKSHEET: Factors to Consider in Decreasing the Risk of Falling

Have Considered

Biological Changes in the Body

Y N

- 1. Illnesses (Bowel/Bladder Incontinence, Stroke, Parkinson, etc.)
- 2. Fear of falling
- 3. Poor eyesight
- 4. Problem with feet
- 5. Disease (physical abilities impaired – stroke, Parkinson, bladder, etc.)
- 6. Poor balance
- 7. Weakened muscles

Have Considered

Things You Can do to Reduce Indoor Environmental Risks

Y N

- 1. Remove trip hazards such as clutter, spills, electrical cords, pets, etc. from floors and stairs.
- 2. Secure corner of rugs to prevent ends from rolling.
- 3. Use area and throw rugs with non-slip bottoms.
- 4. Use contrasting tips of opposing colors on stairs or steps.
- 5. Use bright lighting throughout the house.
- 6. Avoid waxing or polishing floors.
- 7. Use night lights.
- 8. Mount rail on side of bed (bed rails).
- 9. Mount grab bars on wall in or near shower, tub, and toilet.
- 10. Mount rails on both sides of stairs.
- 11. Use a raised toilet seat with or without arms or bars.
- 12. Use non-skid bath mat beside tub/shower to absorb water.
- 13. Place a non-slip rubber mat or strips on bottom of tub.
- 14. Install a shower chair.
- 15. Use a hand-held shower head.
- 16. Mount a liquid soap dispenser near tub or shower.
- 17. Avoid taking a bath in a deep bath tub when weak or frail.

Have Considered

Decisions/Choices that Can Reduce Risk Factors

Y N

- 1. Wear properly fitting clothes and shoes at all times that do not limit your movement.
- 2. Rise slowly from chair, sofa or bed.
- 3. Always keep a portable phone with you at all times.
- 4. Avoid using several prescribed or over-the-counter medications that could have negative side effects.
- 5. Accept that your body is changing and that your movement may be limited as you grow older.

Comments:

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). WISQARS – Web-based injury statistics query and reporting system. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/>

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