

Fall Risk

Summary

1. Medications
2. Home Risk Factors
3. Assistive Device Use
4. Management of Blood Pressure Variations

Medications

Many classes of drugs have been associated with increased fall risk in community dwelling adults. Medications are considered a modifiable risk factor which means they can be managed and changed. The most common medications are those that affect the brain or play a role in the cardiovascular system. Certain medications than can lead to increased fall risk:

- Psychoactive medications: anticonvulsants, antidepressants, antipsychotics, benzodiazapines, opioids, sedatives/hypnotics
Side effects: confusion, dizziness, orthostatic hypotension
- Antidiabetic agent
Side effects: hypoglycemia
- Cardiovascular agents: beta blockers, alpha blockers, calcium channel blockers, antiarrhythmics, diuretics
Side effects: hypotension, bradycardia, dizziness
- Analgesics: opioids, NSAIDS
Side effects: sedation, confusion
- Anticonvulsants
Side effects: sedation, psychomotor impairment
- Anticholinergics
Side effects: sedation, confusion

*Before making any medication changes discuss with you doctor!

Risk Factors

Intrinsic

- Advanced age
- Previous falls/fear of falling
- Muscle weakness
- Gait and balance problems
- Poor vision
- Hypotension/medication

Extrinsic

- Lack of stair handrails
- Poor stair design

- Lack of bathroom grab bars
- Dim/poor lighting
- Tripping hazards: cords, throw rugs, highly polished floors

Management

- **Clean up clutter**
Keeping your house tidy decreases risk for tripping. Avoid stacking objects in narrow hallways and on stairs especially to decrease fall risk.
- **Repair or remove tripping hazards**
Examine each room looking for loose carpet and floor boards. Remove throw rugs and exposed cords
- **Install handrails/grab bars or use an AD**
Helpful to decrease falls on stairs, when getting on/off the toilet, or getting into/out of the shower. These devices help to provide extra support to decrease risk of falling while doing everyday tasks.
- **Avoid wearing loose clothing**
Baggy or loose fitting clothes can increase risk for tripping and falling
- **Light it right**
Install brighter bulbs in areas such as near stairs and in hallways. If stairs are difficult to see you can line the front of the step with bright tape!
- **Wear shoes**
Wearing shoes in your home helps to prevent slipping hazards. Non slip socks can also help decrease slipping hazards in the home
- **Make it non slip**
Using non slip mats in the shower/bathtub and other slippery when wet surfaces can help to prevent falls

Assistive Device Use

Assistive devices are used to improve stability in adults with increased fall risk. The goal is to maintain independent but safe mobility.

- **Medical walkers and canes**
Both assistive devices help to provide more stability when walking. If more stability is needed a walker would be more beneficial due to increasing your base of support. If walking with a cane remember the cane goes on the non-affected side!
- **Handrails and grab bars**
Allow you to use your arms to help provide more support when transferring or moving from one place to another. The more support you have the more you decrease your chances of falling!
- **Reaching aids**
For the elderly population bending down and getting back up can be difficult and increase risk for falls. Using a reaching aid or making sure that all needed objects are easily reachable can be helpful!
- **Seat lifts/shower chairs**
Use of a seat lift can help to decrease the difficulty of getting onto and off of the toilet independently. Shower chairs can be helpful for individuals with decreased strength or balance to prevent falls in the shower and maintain independence.