

## Preventing Falls at Home

### Getting Ready to Learn About Preventing Falls at Home

Learning something new can be hard, especially if you are not feeling well. The purpose of this learning plan is for you and the staff to review the following information together. Here are some good things to tell the staff:

- Who you want to learn with you. We would like to have someone who will be helping you at home learn with you.
- The best way for you to learn. Do you learn best by reading a book or pamphlet, or by doing things yourself?
- If you are not feeling well, if you are in pain or you cannot focus on learning right now.

**Because this information is important to your health, we may explain something more than once, and give you information in small bits over several days.** If there is something you don't understand it's OK to ask us to explain.

### What I Need to Learn About Preventing Falls at Home

By the time I leave the hospital I will be able to tell the staff:

1. What my risks are for falls
2. What might cause a fall at home
3. What I can do to prevent a fall

The staff will use three questions to teach me about preventing falls at home:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show them what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about falls and how to take care of myself.

**What is my main problem?**

I am at risk for falling which could cause injury. Many medical conditions put people at higher risk for falls. I may be in an unfamiliar place or have one of these conditions:

- Two or more falls in the past 6 months
- Vision loss
- Hearing loss
- Foot pain or shoe problems
- Medicines that may make me dizzy, drowsy, or cause low blood pressure
- Recent surgery or a hospital stay
- Problem with walking, balance or reflexes
- Decrease in muscle strength
- High or low blood pressure
- Changes in urine or bowel habits
- Depression
- Dizziness
- Difficulty moving around
- Male
- Age over 65

I will talk with my caregivers about why I am at risk for falling.

**What do I need to do?**

I need to look for things in my home that may cause a fall, and make my home safer. Here are some things to check:

**Lights:**

- Use good lighting. Have light switches at both ends of stairs and hallways.
- Keep a small night light on in case you need to get up at night.
- Replace burned out bulbs. Lampshades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.

**Stairs:**

- Use handrails on both sides of the stairs. Make sure handrails are tight and as long as the stairs.
- Fix loose or uneven steps.
- If the stairs have carpet, make sure it is firmly attached to each step. If the stairs are not carpet, attach non-slip rubber treads on the stairs.

- Install good lighting in the stairway.
- Paint a different color on the top front edge of each step.

### **Floors:**

- Use nonskid mats, especially on floors that may get wet.
- Remove small rugs.
- Tack down the edges of rugs.
- Repair or remove torn or loose carpet.
- Remove cords or wires on the floor.
- Remove clutter.
- Do not use floor wax.
- Clean up spills right away.

### **Furniture:**

- Don't have trailing electric cords across the floors.
- Arrange furniture so that it is not in the way.
- Have furniture at the proper height to make it easy to get in and out.
- Have furniture that is sturdy and gives support.
- Do not use furniture polish spray. Spray that gets on the floor may make floors slippery.

### **Bedroom:**

- Place a lamp, flashlight, and batteries where they can be reached from the bed.
- Keep bed at proper height to make it easier to get in and out.
- Use non-skid slippers with closed backs.
- Sit at the edge of the bed for a few minutes before standing up.

### **Bathroom:**

- Install grab bars in the tub, shower and around the toilet.
- Use non-skid mats in tub, shower and floor.
- Keep towels and equipment in reach.
- Consider using an elevated toilet seat and a tub bench.
- Use handheld shower nozzle

**Kitchen:**

- Have light switches within easy reach.
- Keep frequently used items at the front of cupboards or drawers.
- Have stove controls within easy reach.

**Storage:**

- Store food and regularly used items where they can be easily reached (about waist high in cabinets).
- Use a steady step stool with a hand bar if you must reach high. Never use a chair as a step stool.

**Outdoors:**

- Repair cracked sidewalks.
- Trim shrubs along path to home.
- Install good lighting by doorways and path to doors.

**Telephone:**

- Keep the phone within easy reach, especially in the kitchen and bathroom.
- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.

**Clothing and shoes:**

- Do not wear clothing that is long enough to trip over.
- Wear shoes or non-skid slippers with closed backs and good support.
- Do not wear shoes with thick soles.

**Children and Pets:**

- Watch for children and pets underfoot.
- Watch for toys or spilled pet food.

Other things to be aware of:

**Diet:**

- Drink enough liquids to prevent dizziness.
- Eat a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D to keep bones strong.

**Exercise:**

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise can increase muscle strength, balance and coordination.  
Some examples might be:
  - Walking
  - Water aerobics
  - Tai Chi
  - Strength exercises.

**Preventative Health:**

- Get up slowly after sitting or lying down.
- Get a yearly eye check.
- Talk with a doctor or pharmacist about medicine side effects that may increase risk for falls.
- Ask a doctor about calcium and Vitamin D to help strengthen bones.
- Take care of foot problems and pain that can lead to a fall.
- Use a walker or cane if needed when moving around. Be sure to ask for proper training in using these tools.
- Consider wearing a safety alert device that can be used to call for help in case of a fall.

**Why is this important to me?**

At least half of all falls happen at home. Each year, thousands of people are seriously hurt, disabled, or die from a fall. Take these steps to make a home safer and prevent falls.

As part of my care and to help me understand, I may receive:

- Preventing Falls at Home Education Plan.
- Home Health Care with Home Safety Evaluation

## Preventing Falls at Home Education Plan

### Resources for Staff

[Keeping the Home Safe: Preventing Falls \(Mosby Nursing Consult\)](#)

### Teaching Tools

- Preventing Falls at Home Education Plan.

### References:

- Auerhahn, C., Capezuti, L., Flaherty, E., & John A. Hartford Foundation Institute for Geriatric Nursing. (2007). *GNRS : geriatric nursing review syllabus : a core curriculum in advanced practice geriatric nursing*. New York, NY: American Geriatrics Society.
- Capezuti, L. (2008). *Evidence-based geriatric nursing protocols for best practice* (3rd ed.). New York: Springer Pub.
- Mayo Clinic Staff. (2014). Fall prevention: simple tips to prevent falls. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/healthy-aging/in-depth/fall-prevention/art-20047358?pg=1>

Always close each teaching session with the question, “What questions do you have for me?”

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