

Fall Prevention

Just the Facts

You may be at risk for falls because of:

- ✓ **Different environments** than you are used to.
- ✓ **Medications** that make you tired, dizzy, or confused.
- ✓ **Weak muscles** from taking steroid medications.
- ✓ **Low red blood cells** or a **low blood pressure** that could make you dizzy.

If you have a history of confusion with any medications for nausea or pain control please let your doctor or nurse know. We want to prevent falls both in the clinic and at home. Please review this information with your family members and friends who are a part of the team to keep you safe.

Your Goals:

- ✓ Prevent injury.
- ✓ Prevent permanent disability.
- ✓ Prevent death.

Emergency Signs and Symptoms:

911

Call 911 IMMEDIATELY at home if:

- You fell and are bleeding.
- Any loss of consciousness occurs.
- If you think you have a broken bone
- If you have fallen and hit your head and have low platelets and/or are on anti-coagulant medications.

*Do not attempt to get up alone. You might hurt yourself trying to get up.

Important Signs and Symptoms:

Report symptoms to doctor or nurse during clinic hours today.

- If you have fallen even if you think that nothing is wrong.

What You Can Do at the Clinic:

- ➔ **Wear good shoes!** This is one of the most important things you can do to prevent falls while you are here. Our floors can be very slippery. Closed-toe,

closed-heel shoes with non-skid soles is the best choice (like tennis shoes). Flip-flops or open sandals are very dangerous. It is OK with us if you put your shoes on our exam tables and beds so that your shoes are always on to keep you safe. We don't want you to EVER walk around in your socks or with bare feet. Non-skid slippers are available if you forgot your good shoes. Please ask for a pair.

- ➡ **Ask for help.** It does not bother the staff for you to ask for help. Even if you get around at home by yourself, you might need extra help while you are in our clinic. We can help you get from one place to another in our clinic, or get on an exam table, or walk you to the bathroom.
- ➡ **Move around with care.** A lot of equipment here is on wheels. Be careful that you don't lean on wheeled equipment for support. Wheelchairs are available to use in the clinic.
- ➡ **Get up slowly after treatments and procedures.** Wait to see if you feel dizzy or weak. You might need help from a staff person.
- ➡ **Use your assistive devices.** If you use a hearing aid, glasses, prosthesis or walker/cane, be sure to bring it to the clinic and use it while you are here.
- ➡ **If you see anything that is hazardous in our clinic (like a spill on the floor) please tell staff right away.**

Call for professional help when needed:

- ➡ If you are groggy, dizzy, or feeling faint.
- ➡ If you fall, please let staff know RIGHT AWAY by yelling or asking anyone around you to help.
- ➡ Do NOT attempt to get up alone. You might hurt yourself trying to get up.

What You Can Do At Home:

- ➡ Think about the shoes that you are wearing. Make sure you do not wear footwear that adds to your risk for falls such as slippery slippers, slippery socks, and high-heels, shoes without backs and flip-flops. Wear sturdy, non-skid shoes such as tennis shoes. Please wear shoes in the bathroom.
- ➡ Move furniture so you have clear paths.
- ➡ Keep the floor, pathways and stairs clear of objects.
- ➡ Never put small objects inside/outside your house, especially on the stairs.
- ➡ Fix loose or uneven steps inside and outside your house.
- ➡ Have sturdy handrails for the stairs. Make sure carpet on the stairs is attached firmly to every step.
- ➡ Consider using reflecting tape at the top and bottom of stairs.
- ➡ Tape cords and wires to the floor/wall away from your path.
- ➡ Remove area rugs.

- ➡ Have bright lighting.
- ➡ Place a lamp next to your bed within easy reach and turn on the light when getting out of bed.
- ➡ Install nightlights all the way to the bathroom (bedroom, hallways and bathroom).
- ➡ Put a non-slip mat in the bathtub.
- ➡ Consider installing a grab bar in the bathtub and near the toilet.
- ➡ If you have balance problems, consider using a shower seat or urinal for showering and dressing.
- ➡ Keep items that you use often within easy reach.
- ➡ Never stand on a chair.
- ➡ Get up slowly after sitting up or lying down.
- ➡ Consider painting doorsills and other flooring level changes a different color so you don't trip.
- ➡ Review medications regularly with your providers to identify medicines that cause sleepiness, dizziness or confusion so you can be extra-safe after taking these medicines.
- ➡ Don't drink alcohol if taking sedating medications.
- ➡ Talk to your doctor about seeing a physical therapist for mobility aid and balance and strengthening. Practice approved exercises regularly to improve your strength, balance and coordination.
- ➡ If you live alone, consider getting an emergency system that you can wear around your wrist or neck to alert help immediately if you fall.

References:

Holly, S. (2002). A Look at the Problem of Falls Among People with Cancer, *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*

Rao, S.S. (2005). How to Prevent Falling, *American Family Physician*