

STOP “FALLING STARS”

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Non-Slip Pants**

Increase the amount of time seniors can live in their own homes or maintain their current living status implementing simple fall prevention steps. Falls affect not only that particular individual but their entire family in many ways. Falls can cause moderate to severe injuries, such as hip/knee fractures, head traumas and can increase the risk of early death. Fortunately, falls are a public health problem that is largely preventable. The initial “red flags” are usually first noted by friends and neighbors and not the immediate family. The reason, they don’t live with them and tend to “ignore” the fact there is a problem, acknowledging their loved one is declining.

The stats and numbers continue to rise regarding falls leading to hospitalizations, emergency room visits, admittance to institutions and dollar figures.

Initially an assessment needs to be performed by professionals addressing medical factors.

CHANGE IN MEDICAL CONDITIONS:

- Infection
- Osteoporosis
- Dehydration
- Cardio/Pulmonary
- Visual Disturbance
- Increased Falls- vertigo, light headed, unsteady gait, weakness, impaired mobility
- Frequent Toileting
- Mental Status
- Insomnia/Restlessness

CHANGE IN MEDICATIONS:

- Psychotropics
- Antidepressants
- Cardiac
- Anticoagulants
- Bowel Preps
- Diuretics
- Note side effects of medications

ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS & CORRECTIONS

All Living Spaces:

- Clutter- Remove papers, blankets, phone/extension cords from walking paths
- Rugs/Carpets- Remove those pretty rugs. Seniors tend to shuffle their feet when walking Walkers and rollators become trapped and curl up edges. Carpeting, low pile (indoor/outdoor) is desirable.
- Electrical Cords- Place behind furniture, secure in place.
- Adequate Lighting- If possible, maintain the same lighting throughout their living space. Night lights, fixtures where they can be easily reached without falling over, stairwells, and path to bathroom.
- Sturdy Furniture- Seniors tend to reach out to furniture for support. Avoid light furniture which can be easily tipped.
- Heavy Chairs with arms- Prevents tipping and provides assistance when rising; limits grabbing at items nearby
- Hand rails- Provide near any steps making sure they are secure
- Steps marked with bright tape- Allows marked visibility between steps
- Items within reach- Lights, personal items, food, appliances
- Contrast paint on floor levels- Allows pronounced visibility
- Flashlights available- Keep at bedside, bathroom and next to favorite chair

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- Candles- Totally a no-no
- Portable Phone- If possible at least 3 for bedside, bathroom and favorite sitting area
- Remote for TV- Near favorite sitting area, prevents bending/leaning on TV for selections.

BATHROOM

- Grab Bars- Secure in shower/bathtub area and toilet area
- Non-slip/skid mats- Place in & out of shower to prevent slipping
- Shower bench/stool- Allows for stability
- Raised/padded toilet seat
- Hand held shower head- Mount at arm’s reach
- Long handled wash sponge- Assists for washing of feet/bending over
- Liquid soap with pump vs. bar soap- Bars slip easily from hands

KITCHEN

- Avoid Spills
- Remove step stools- Even secure/heavy stools can be a problem

BEDROOM

- Bedside light- Easy accessible
- Phone- Easy accessible
- Flashlight- Provide next to bed
- Bedside Commode/Urinal- Do to urgency, prevents seniors from “hurrying” to reach bathroom

OUTDOORS

- Install ramps- Making sure they have a low incline
- Uneven Sidewalks- Repair
- Snow/Ice- Keep clean, use salt. Seniors should walk in snow covered areas when in doubt
- Handrails- Secure by all entrances and step areas
- Sunglasses- Wear at all times to limit glare

FOOTWEAR

- Proper fitted shoes with low heels and rubber soles. Avoid loose back. Slip on shoes permissible if they fit properly.
- Avoid slippers if possible.

EDUCATE/USE OF EQUIPEMENT

- Lock wheelchairs, rollators- Don’t use as a grab/pulling device when rising
- Canes and walkers- Apply rubber grips when outdoors
- Hand Reachers- Keep in kitchen, bedroom and favorite lounging spot
- Sock Aides- Bending forward may cause vertigo, shortness of breath and poor equilibrium
- Long handled shoe horns- Again, prevents bending forward
- Proper Nutrition

EXERCISE

Emergency Plan with electronic medical device

FALL PREVENTION TECHNOLOGIES:

- SafetyBunns, non-slip pants
- Bed and/or chair alarms.
- Alarms at exits.
- Nurse call systems and communication systems.
- Low beds for patients at risk for falls.
- Video camera surveillance