

FALL INJURIES

Fall Injuries – Every year more than one out of four adults older than 65 has a fall. Less than half tell their doctor.

Center For Disease Control (CDC) Facts

- Over 800,000 patients each year are hospitalized because of a fall injury, most often because of a head injury or hip fracture
- 1 out of 5 falls cause a serious injury like a broken bone or head injury
- Each year 3 million older adults are treated in emergency departments for fall injuries
- Each year 300,000 or more older people are hospitalized for hip fractures
- More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling
- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries (TBI)

Risk Factors for Fall Injuries

- Most falls are caused by a combination of risk factors including:
 - Leg and hip weakness
 - Vitamin D deficiency
 - Difficulty with walking and balancing
 - Medication use - tranquilizers, sedatives, pain medications or antidepressants
 - Vision problems
 - Foot pain or poor footwear
- Home hazards:
 - Broken or uneven steps
 - Throw rugs that aren't skid proof
 - Clutter around the home
 - Companion animals

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What Can Happen After a Fall?

- A bone can be broken or injured during a fall
- Head injuries - these can be very serious, especially if the person is taking medications like blood thinners. An older person that falls should see their doctor right away to make sure they do not have a brain injury
- If a person is living alone a caregiver or loved one may not find them unconscious on the floor until it is too late
- After a fall a person may become afraid of falling. They may stop activities like walking, exercising or doing other social activities. The decrease in activity causes weaker muscles and bones that help maintain good balance to become weaker
- Weakness and decreased balance sets the person up for more falls and increased risk of bad health outcomes

Preventing Falls

- **Talk to your doctor to**
 - Evaluate your risk
 - Review your medications
- Do strength and balance exercises to make your legs stronger and improve balance
- Have your eyes checked at least once every year
- **Ways to make your home safer**
 - Remove things you could trip over
 - Add grab bars inside and outside of the shower and next to the toilet
 - Add hand rails on both sides of the stairs
 - Make sure your home has lots of light
 - Keep items you use a lot in cabinets that are easy to reach without a step stool
 - Add non-skid mats in the bathtub and on shower floors