

Prevent a Fall - 2018 Leader Lesson

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Prevent a Fall



At a Glance: Every 20 minutes an older adult dies from a fall in the US. Take a stand against falls.

Time Required: Approximately 20 minutes

Objectives: Through this interactive lesson, participants will 1) learn steps they can take to prevent falls 2) identify fall risks, and 3) become more confident in staying active.

Materials Needed:

Download and print brochure on Check for Safety
https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI_CheckforSafety_brochure-a.pdf

Teaching the Lesson: Read or present the program. Then do one or more of the activities at the end of the lesson

The Lesson:

Introduction:

Falls are a threat to the health of older adults and can reduce their ability to remain independent. In addition to pain and suffering, and the high cost of rehabilitation, falls with or without injury also carry a heavy quality of life impact.

A growing number of older adults fear falling and, as a result, often self-limit activities and social engagements. Resulting limitations can result in further physical decline, depression, social isolation, and feelings of helplessness.

However, falls aren't something that just happens when you age, there are proven ways to reduce falls.

Are You at Risk?

Use these questions to screen for at-risk older adults:

Have you fallen in the past year?

Do you feel unsteady when standing or walking?

Do you worry about falling?

Do you feel any dizziness, joint pain, shortness of breath, or numbness in your feet and legs when you walk?

What can you do:

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medications. Your doctor can review your medications for side effects and interactions that may increase your risk of falling. To help with fall prevention, your doctor may consider weaning you off medications that make you tired or affect your thinking, such as sedatives and some types of antidepressants.
- The CDC recommends Vitamin D for improved bone, muscle and nerve health (check with your doctor)
- Develop a support group. Have someone who will check on you regularly and that you can call upon for help or assistance when needed.

Develop a Fall Prevention Plan:

1. **Speak up.** Talk to your doctor about fall risks and prevention. Tell your doctor right away if you have fallen, or if you're afraid you might fall, or if you feel unsteady. Many people are embarrassed or fear they will lose their independence if they tell someone they fell.
2. **Keep moving.** Physical activity can go a long way toward fall prevention. With your doctor's OK, consider activities such as walking, water workouts or tai chi — a gentle exercise that involves slow and graceful dance-like movements. Such activities reduce the risk of falls by improving strength, balance, coordination and flexibility. If you avoid physical activity because you're afraid it will make a fall more likely, tell your doctor. He or she may recommend carefully monitored exercise programs or refer you to a physical therapist. The physical therapist can create a custom exercise program aimed at improving your balance, flexibility, muscle strength and gait.
3. **Check your eyes.** Have a vision screening once a year and update glasses as needed.
4. **Wear sensible shoes.** Consider changing your footwear as part of your fall-prevention plan. High heels, floppy slippers and shoes with slick soles can make you slip, stumble and fall. So can walking in your stocking feet. Instead, wear properly fitting, sturdy shoes with nonskid soles. Sensible shoes may also reduce joint pain.

5. Remove home hazards Most falls happen at home. Get rid of hazards. Keep floors free of clutter. To make your home safer:

- Remove boxes, newspapers, electrical cords and phone cords from walkways.
- Move coffee tables, magazine racks and plant stands from high-traffic areas.
- Secure loose rugs with double-faced tape, tacks or a slip-resistant backing — or remove loose rugs from your home.
- Repair loose, wooden floorboards and carpeting right away.
- Store clothing, dishes, food and other necessities within easy reach.
- Immediately clean spilled liquids, grease or food.
- Use nonslip mats in your bathtub or shower. Use a bath seat, which allows you to sit while showering.
- Have handrails installed on staircases
- Add grab bars in the bathroom.

6. Light up your living space. Keep your home brightly lit to avoid tripping on objects that are hard to see. Also:

- Place night lights in your bedroom, bathroom and hallways.
- Place a lamp within reach of your bed for middle-of-the-night needs.
- Make clear paths to light switches that aren't near room entrances. Consider trading traditional switches for glow-in-the-dark or illuminated switches.
- Turn on the lights before going up or down stairs.
- Store flashlights in easy-to-find places in case of power outages.
- Keep small flashlights handy – in your purse, by the bed, etc.

7. Use assistive devices. Your doctor might recommend using a cane or walker to keep you steady. Other assistive devices can help, too. For example:

- Hand rails for both sides of stairways
- Nonslip treads for bare-wood steps
- A raised toilet seat or one with armrests
- Grab bars for the shower or tub
- A sturdy plastic seat for the shower or tub — plus a hand-held shower nozzle for bathing while sitting down

8. Move more carefully. Dr. Bunning explains that many people fall at home by moving too quickly from a sitting to a standing position and vice versa. Preventing falls like this is as easy as taking your time. “All you have to do is pause after going from lying down to sitting and from sitting to standing,” he says. “Also take a pause before using the railing on stairs, whether going up or down.”

Activities:

Choose one or more of the following activities to go with the lesson:

1. Distribute Check for Safety handout and ask FCE members to complete.
2. Do the Brain Storm Activity.

Evaluation

Ask the following questions at the end of the lesson.

1. Name at least two things you have learned today about preventing falls.
2. Identify one or more causes of falls.
3. Describe at least one step which you will take to decrease your risk of falling.

BRAIN STORM:

Let each member tell about a fall they have had or an instance where they almost fell but were caught by someone or managed to grab hold of something just in time. Let the club members brain storm ways this could have been prevented.

Source of Information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/steady>

https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI_CheckforSafety_brochure-a.pdf

<https://www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/healthy-aging/in-depth/fall-prevention>

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/longevity/future-planning/prevent-falls-at-home.aspx>