

Stand Up to Falling

Medications and Fall Prevention

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Medication causes some older adults to fall. Many seniors are prescribed medications to treat various ailments or diseases, and such drugs may have side effects that lead to falls. Combinations of medicines also create greater chances for adverse drug interaction and/or side effects. Taking four or more prescription and/or over-the-counter medications significantly increases the risk for falling.

Fall Prevention and Tips for Safe Medication Use

- Keep an up-to-date list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications as well as dietary and herbal supplements that you are taking. (See medication log attached to this fact sheet).
- Take your list of medications with you to all doctor and pharmacy visits.
- Ask your doctor and pharmacist to review your medications.
- If you take four (4) or more medications—even over-the-counter medications—remember that it is especially important to talk to your doctor and pharmacist.
- Follow your doctor's and pharmacist's instructions and dosage recommendations for all medications.
- When prescribed a new medication or supplement, ask your doctor and pharmacist if the medication is replacing something else, is an addition to your other medications, or interacts with anything else you are taking. Don't forget to update your log.
- Monitor your heart rate, blood pressure, or blood sugar, as recommended by your doctor.
- Report any side effects of your medication(s) to your doctor and pharmacist.
- Share your medication and side-effect information with family members and/or caregivers.
- Talk with your doctor(s) and pharmacist(s) about any concerns you may have.

Falling Facts

The risk of falling and of being seriously injured in a fall increases with age, but older adults (65+) are not falling because they are old. Some older adults may be at increased risk of falling because of a neurological disorder or a disease that causes trouble with walking, posture, and balance. Others may fall because of a number of preventable risk factors including

- Lack of exercise
- Unsafe home environments
- Vision problems
- Lack of balance
- Medication usage

By addressing such risk factors, a person can lower his/her chance of falling or prevent a fall from occurring.

In a given year, one in three older adults can expect to fall. Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury-related death among older adults. Falls are also the leading cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma among older adults. Men age 65 and older are more likely to die from a fall; older women are more likely to experience a nonfatal fall injury, such as a hip fracture. Regardless of gender, after the age of 60, both the incidence of falling and the severity of fall-related complications increase. Such falls among seniors jeopardize health and independence.

The Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC) reports that older patients who are hospitalized for falling are six times more likely than younger patients to be discharged into a nursing home for intermediate or long-term care.

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