

Slip & Fall Prevention Saves Lives and Saves Money

Falls are one of the leading causes of unintentional injuries in the United States, accounting for nearly 8.6 million visits to emergency departments, according to *Injury Facts*, 2011 edition. Adults 55 and older are more prone to being victims of falls, and the resulting injuries can diminish the ability to lead active, independent lives. The number of fall deaths among adults 65 and older is four times the number of fall deaths among all other age groups.

The mortality rate is 12-30% following a hip fracture. (*Postellic 2001*) .The Slip and Fall incident is the leading cause of injury related deaths and hospitalization in patients more than 75 years old. One of four who fracture a hip will die within 6 months and more than 50% who survive a hip fracture are discharged into a nursing home at a per incident cost exceeding \$50,000. Only 25% ever return to their previous level of function even after rehabilitation.

Medicare costs related to slip and fall presently exceed 20 billion annually. In 2000, 1.8 million fall incidents accounted for more than 16 billion in direct medical expenses. They are expected to rise to 32 billion by 2020.

What can be done?

Researchers have found that common environmental risk factors may contribute to about half of all home falls. The National Safety Council recommends:

- ☑ **Pay attention** when walking or using stairs.
- ☑ **Avoid distractions**, such as texting or reading while walking, that can lead to a slip, trip or fall due to a step, crack or hole in the ground.
- ☑ **Be aware of surroundings** at all times. Falls can happen in any location, even in familiar areas.
- ☑ **Wear clothes and properly fitted, low-heeled, non-slip footwear** that will not interfere with walking and transferring
- ☑ **Keep pathways and steps free** of ice, snow, newspapers and leaves.
- ☑ **Remove clutter** from residential areas. Remove all area rugs. Keep all electrical wires and telephone cords secured safely out of pathways.
- ☑ **Properly light** all areas of the home, including hallways and stairways.
- ☑ **Keep floors dry**, wiping up any spills immediately.
- ☑ **Have regular eyesight check-ups**, and adjust eyewear accordingly. Poor vision can greatly increase the chance of falling
- ☑ **Exercise**, such as brisk walking, tai chi and yoga, helps reduce falls by improving strength and balance. Stay hydrated while exercising and consult with a physician before starting an exercise program.
- ☑ **Review all medications** with a doctor or pharmacist including herbal and over the counter medications.
- ☑ **Proper placement, installation and use of support products such as ramps and grab bars** will increase safety and independence.

DISCLAIMER: *The above checklist is for information purposes only and may not apply in whole or in part to your particular situation. Always speak directly with your health care provider about ways to prevent falls.*