

The Four E's: Preventing Falls

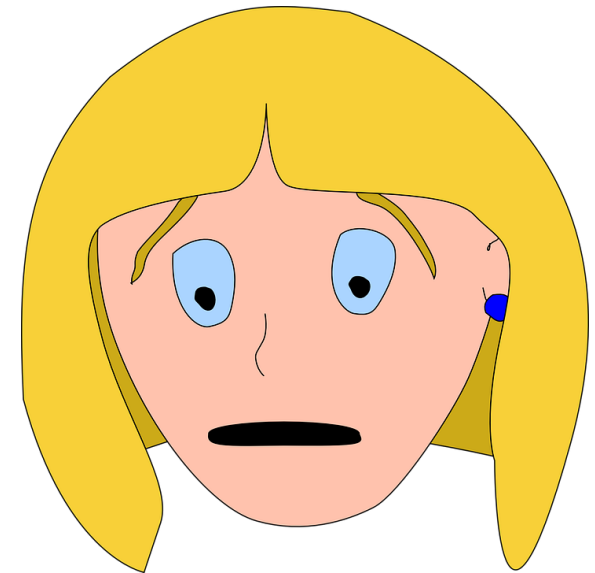
Falls can be dangerous to those we support

- Falling is the leading cause of injury-related hospitalization
- Adults with developmental disabilities have an increased risk of falling
- They are more likely to experience an injury after a fall
- With each fall, the chance of falling again increases



Falls can cause harm in many ways

- People who fall, even if they are not injured, may develop a fear of falling
- A fear of falling can cause a person to limit their daily activities, both social and physical
- Again, the chance of falling increases



What you can do to prevent falls

Just remember the four **E**'s

1. Evaluation

2. Exercise

3. Environment

4. Education



Most falls are caused by a combination of personal and environmental risk factors

1. Evaluation: Evaluating risk

- Here are some of the risk conditions to check for each individual you support:
 - Has the person previously fallen?
 - Does the person have difficulty walking?
 - Any balance issues and/or muscle weakness?
 - Any difficulty rising from a low chair or bed?
 - How is the person's eyesight and hearing?
 - Does the person get dizzy or feel light-headed when standing or turning?
 - Any Vitamin D deficiency?
 - Use of an assistive device such as a wheelchair, cane or walker?
 - Takes multiple prescribed medications or medications that cause drowsiness?
 - Suffers from confusion, depression or memory loss?
 - Has foot pain or wears improper footwear?
 - Has a fear of falling?

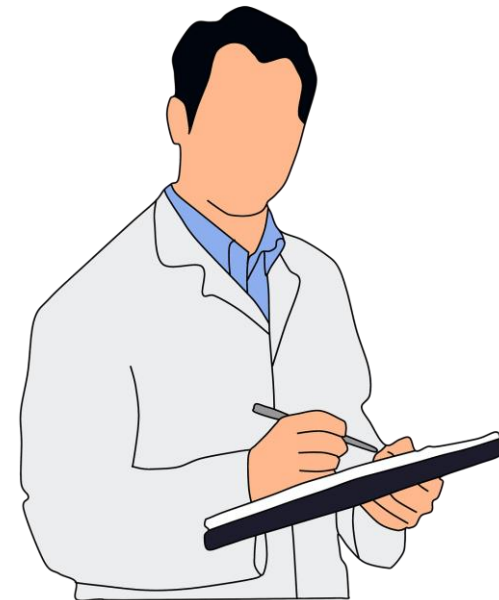


1. Evaluation: Getting started

- Ask these questions:
 - ✓ Did the person fall in the past year?
 - ✓ Does the person seem unsteady when standing or walking?
 - ✓ Do they worry about falling?
- If the answer is “**yes**” to any of these, you might need further evaluation from a doctor
- Also be sure to complete a **risk of falling checklist** before seeing a doctor!

1. Evaluation: Talking to a doctor

- Things to mention to the doctor:
 - Medical conditions, like epilepsy or osteoporosis
 - Recent medical issues, like urinary tract infections (UTIs)
 - Any medications
- The doctor may recommend:
 - Changing medications
 - Consulting with a physical therapist or
 - Taking other tests (like a vision test)



2. Exercise – It can help

- Everyone benefits from physical exercise!
- Physical activities can help a person:
 - Maintain and improve physical strength and fitness
 - Improve their ability to do everyday activities
 - Improve their ability to balance
 - Manage and improve diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis and other diseases
 - Reduce feelings of depression and improve their mood



2. Exercise – What to try

- Explore your community or go for a walk
- Find community classes that might work for the person
- **Go4Life** (<https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/>) provides motivational ideas and activities and exercises specifically designed to help people build balance and keep from falling
- Work together to create a plan for safe physical activity (what, when, where) and do it!

3. Environment: Increase home safety

Did you know that most falls happen in the home?
Hazards may be easy to overlook.

- Look for:
 - Poorly lit spaces
 - Tripping surfaces, like steps or throw rugs
 - No handrails along stairs or in the bathroom
 - Broken or unstable furniture
 - Wet slippery surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom
 - Wires, cords, and clutter
- Identify all hazards. Most things are simple fixes
- Outdoor hazards might include uneven sidewalks, curbs, and slippery streets after a rain
- Make sure people have shoes that are fit for the activity and weather



4. Education: Fall prevention in practice

- Learn how to recognize risks
- Learn prevention steps to take
- Learn to identify, remove, or fix environmental hazards, or report problems
- Make sure you and the person at risk know what to do if someone falls





4. Education - Fall prevention plan

- Develop a **fall prevention plan** with the person at risk. Involve their doctor, physical therapist and others.
- Include:
 - A plan for regular physical activity that fits with the person's interests and abilities
 - A plan for proper use and maintenance of assistive devices
 - An annual appointment with the person's eye doctor
 - An annual visit with the person's doctor to review medications and talk about medical conditions that increase fall risk
 - A plan for regular re-evaluation of personal or environmental risks.

4. Education – Keep going!!

- Meet the person at risk on a regular basis to discuss the fall prevention plan.
- Review documentation from any falls using a **fall log**:
 - Talk about what worked or didn't work for the individual
 - Make changes to the plan as necessary
- Continue to evaluate for risks
- With some “frequent fallers,” the cause of falls cannot always be identified. Instead, develop a plan of support to reduce as many risks of injury as possible.

Falls can be prevented through...

1. Evaluation:

- Evaluate for personal risk factors. ID most at risk individuals.
- Ensure people have vision checked annually.
- Have a doctor or pharmacist routinely check all medications.



2. Exercise:

- Promote healthy lifestyles including physical activity.
- Participation in a good balance or exercise program is key to fall prevention.



3. Environment:

- Ensure home and community safety.
- Conduct onsite home safety checks and make changes.



4. Education:

- Educate yourself and people at risk as to its importance.
- Develop and implement individualized fall prevention plans for people at risk.

