

Preventing Falls in Seniors & Elderly

One out of three seniors over 65 may experience a fall each year



About NuevaCare

NuevaCare provides non-medical home care services to seniors who need assistance with their activities of daily living.

Our services include:

- Medication reminders
- Respite care
- Grocery shopping
- Errands & household duties
- Transportation
- Supervise walking and fall prevention
- Light housekeeping
- Laundry/ironing & changing bed linens
- Socialization & companionship
- Alzheimer's/Dementia support
- Ambulation assistance
- Incontinence support
- Bathing & grooming supervision
- Meal planning & preparation
- Hygiene assistance
- Dressing assistance

Seniors are susceptible to falls for a number of different reasons – bad balance, poor eyesight, light headedness, overall weakness and fragility. In fact, it is estimated that one in every three men and women over the age of 65 will fall this year.

Falls represent a serious health risk for seniors. Statistics regarding seniors and falls are staggering. Consider the following (from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

- One in every three adults 65 and older fall each year.
- Falls represent the leading cause of injury deaths in this age group.
- Falls are the most common cause of injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.
- Falls account for 87 percent of all fractures for people 65+.
- Within this age group, 60 percent of fatal falls happen at home, 30 percent in public places, and 10 percent in health care institutions.

- Of all fractures from falls, hip fractures cause the greatest number of deaths and lead to the most severe health problems.
- Half of all older adults hospitalized for hip fractures cannot return home or live independently after their injuries.

Many elderly people, due to the physical problems associated with aging and precautions they have failed to take at home, are accidents waiting to happen.

As a result of brittle bones and slow reflexes, these falls are often serious, resulting in broken hips or, by trying to break their fall, injured arms or wrists.

The likelihood of falls within this population is largely due to the realities of aging itself: poor balance and coordination, bad vision, a dependence on medications that leave people disoriented or light-headed, and overall weak and fragile.

Preventing Falls *in* Seniors & Elderly

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Should You Fall

The National Institutes of Health recommends the following steps be taken should you fall:

- Stay as calm as possible. Take several deep breaths to try to relax.
- Remain still on the floor or ground for a few moments. This will help you get over the shock of falling. It will also give you time to decide if you're hurt before getting up. Getting up too quickly or in the wrong way could make an injury worse.
- If you think you can get up safely without help, roll over onto your side. Rest again while your body and blood pressure adjust. Slowly get up on your hands and knees, and crawl to a sturdy chair.
- Put your hands on the chair seat and slide one foot forward so that it is flat on the floor. Keep the other leg bent so the knee is on the floor. From this kneeling position, slowly rise and turn your body to sit in the chair.
- If you're hurt or can't get up on your own, ask someone for help or call 911. If you're alone, try to get into a comfortable position and wait for help to arrive.
- If you have problems with balance or dizziness, be sure to discuss these with your doctor.
- If you are often alone, and at increased

risk of falling, consider getting a personal emergency response system. This service, which works through your telephone line, provides a button or bracelet to wear at all times in your home. If you fall or need emergency assistance for any reason, a push of the button will alert the service.

Medications may increase your risk of falling. Some common medications that are responsible for falls are:

- Blood pressure medications
- Heart medications
- Diuretics
- Tranquilizers and muscle relaxers.

Precautions taken in the home, where a majority of the falls occur, can reduce their likelihood. Many falls are the result of:

- Items that can be easily tripped over (such as papers, books, clothes and shoes). In addition, moving around phone and electrical wires, as many people do, can create hazards.
- Scattered rugs that bunch up or stick up at the edges. Recommended are double-sided adhesive tapes to keep rugs flat.
- Poor lighting. Many people hope to save money by scrimping on lighting. Good lighting is particularly important with older people who often have decreased vision. In addition, keeping a night light on is important should you get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom.
- Mats in the bathtub and shower floors that may skid.
- Walking in shoes with worn-out soles that may skid on wet floors, or slippers without backs.

It is also important, if you are unsteady, to have handrails on all staircases and grab bars in the bathtub and near the toilet. This provides support and, should you suddenly stumble or feel unsteady, something to grab hold onto.