

Integrating Fall Prevention into Practice

Working as a multidisciplinary team, healthcare providers can help identify and manage patients at risk of falling. You can help reduce falls by screening all older persons once a year for previous falls and/or balance problems.

For those who screen positive, perform a fall risk assessment, and help patients understand and act upon the findings using proven prevention strategies.



Assessments and/or Interventions	Identify who in your practice can do this	What it involves
Screen all older patients for falls		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have patient complete the <i>Stay Independent</i> brochure, or ask the patient these 3 questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Have you fallen in the past year? Do you feel unsteady when standing or walking? Do you worry about falling?
Identify modifiable fall risk factors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the <i>Stay Independent</i> brochure, and take a falls history.
Evaluate gait, lower body strength, and balance Address identified deficits		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer one or more gait, strength, and balance tests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timed Up and Go Test (Recommended) Observe and record patient's postural stability, gait, stride length and sway. - 30-Second Chair Stand Test (Optional) - 4-Stage Balance Test (Optional) As needed, refer to a physical therapist (PT), or recommend a community exercise, or fall prevention program.
Conduct focused physical exam Address modifiable and/or treatable risk factors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to a customary medical exam: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess muscle tone, look for increased tone, and hypertonia (cogwheeling). - Screen for cognitive impairment and depression. - Examine feet and evaluate footwear. Look for structural abnormalities, deficits in sensation, and proprioception. - If needed, refer to podiatrists or pedorthists.
Assess for and manage postural hypotension		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check supine and standing blood pressure using 1-page protocol, <i>Measuring Orthostatic Blood Pressure</i>. Recommend medication changes to reduce hypotension. Monitor patient as he/she makes recommended changes. Counsel patient, and give the brochure, <i>Postural Hypotension: What it is and How to Manage it</i>.
Review and manage medications		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop, switch, or reduce the dose of psychoactive medications when possible. Monitor patient as he/she makes recommended changes.
Increase vitamin D		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend a daily vitamin D supplement.
Assess visual acuity, and optimize vision		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer brief vision test. Refer to ophthalmologists or optometrists.
Address home safety, and how to reduce fall hazards		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counsel patient about reducing fall hazards. Give the CDC brochure, <i>Check for Safety</i>. Refer to OT to assess safety and the patient's ability to function in the home.
Educate about what causes falls, and how to prevent them		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate patient about fall prevention strategies. Give the CDC brochure, <i>What YOU Can Do to Prevent Falls</i>. Recommend exercise, or community fall prevention program.
Identify community exercise and fall prevention programs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have staff contact providers of senior services. Identify community exercise and fall prevention programs for seniors. Compile a resource list of available programs.