Mobility 5.1: Fall Prevention in the Home: Changes for Healthy Living

Falls; if you've had one, you know the feeling: embarrassment and hurt pride then self-reproach for not being more careful, and worried about being a bother if you're hurt. Most people only bruise themselves but one in 20 falls results in a fracture.

While most older adults wouldn't feel safe without health insurance, they may resist making simple changes that can reduce their risk for falls. Identifying and addressing physical changes that affect balance and correcting hazards in and around the home are two key ways older adults can minimize their risk for falls. As you watch the following high-risk situations think about changes that would prevent a fall.

Nighttime.

Oh, good grief.

what changes would you suggest?

Nighttime combined with reduced vision becomes a particularly high-risk period. A sixty-year-old requires twice as much light as a twenty-year-old to see as well, but with proper precautions a person should not fear a nighttime fall. Add night lights or keep a bathroom or hall light on all night. Put on glasses even for a quick trip to the bathroom. sit a moment before rising and get up slowly to improve balance. use a walker, cane, or other assistive device even at home for improved safety — you know, this walker really has helped a lot more than I expected it to.

Maximize vision: stabilize for balance and use assistive devices even at home.

Living Room

What changes would you suggest?

Reduced muscle strength makes it difficult to rise from low seats since most falls take place in the bedroom or living room. Remove clutter and provide a clear path to a favorite chair; a chair that is high enough to get up from easily. Electrical cords are a well-known hazard that can easily be secured with tape near the edge of a rug — oh you're fine, Raven. I don't know what I'd do without you, but I don't know what you do without me either.

Use higher seating, reduce clutter, clear pathways, and secure electrical cords.

Medications.

Now, did that take these already? No, probably not better be sure. Oh, I'm so dizzy. I can't get up. I better just sit here.

What changes would you suggest?

Remembering medications can be a problem for people of all ages. over medication or inappropriate medication in older people can lead to major balance and perception problems. A medication organizer can help avoid double dosage. This is important since older adults process medications through their system more slowly than younger people, because many older adults take more than one prescription, plus over-the-counter drugs, the risk of drug interaction is increased a medication review by a pharmacist or physician will reduce this risk — now I can be sure I don't take my pills twice.

Assure safe medication use, have it reviewed by a pharmacist and physician.

Unsafe Climbing

What changes would you suggest?

Loose footwear and a kitchen chair are ingredients for a fall. Keep dishes, canned goods, and cooking utensils at eye level to reduce the need for unsafe climbing. Wear comfortable, but secure footwear to improve balance. Reduce the need to climb and use safe footwear.

Bath Time

What changes would you suggest?

When a fall in the bath occurs, it hits hard. tile is not kind to bones of any age. use these precautions for a safe bathroom use a tub mat and dry off inside the tub or shower. A bath stool can make this easier. Use a detachable grab bar for security and a large bathmat with non-skid backing — I guess my daughter was right about that grab bar. Good idea! Now I'm ready for that trip to the lake. Reduce slippery surfaces and install and use grab bars.

Steps.

What changes would you suggest?

Reduced vision and a lack of contrast between steps can result in an unexpected trip. Increase the contrast between different levels, the dark mat here contrasts with the light doorway and a white edge clearly shows the next level change. Keep walkways clear of debris to reduce the risk of falling — I wonder what kind of crazy news in the world today. Well, I guess I might as well get the day started.

Increased contrast between levels provides us stable support and keep pathways clear.

Making a few changes to improve balance and remove hazards at home can prevent falls. Think of these changes as another form of health insurance. Pay attention to and discuss any side effects of medications such as dizziness or confusion with your doctor. Have vision checked and wear corrective lenses if prescribed. Improve balance through daily walks stretching exercises and exercises while sitting. Wear supportive, low- heeled shoes, and use walkers and canes as prescribed by your doctor to reduce risk. Reduce clutter and debris, improve lighting both inside and outside and mark level changes with contrasting tape.

Frequently the worst consequence of a fall is the fear of falling again. A person may begin to restrict activities and social participation as acts of self-protection. This can lead to isolation and depression so if you’ve fallen once, take action. Have a registered occupational therapist and physical therapists evaluate your physical functioning at home to identify ways to improve your balance and environment or safety. After all, these are small changes to make for living independently and healthy in your own home.