

Top Tips

Caring for someone at risk of recurrent falls

Introduction

Anyone can have a fall, but older people are more likely to fall, especially if they have a long-term health condition. In care homes, the rate of falls is almost three times that of older people living in the community.

Most falls don't result in serious injury but falls in the older population have wide ranging effects on the individual, their families and also their care providers. It can cause the person to lose confidence, become withdrawn and feel as if they have lost their independence. There is always a risk that a fall could lead to broken bones, a head injury and an increased risk of death.

Residents in care should have an assessment to identify all of the factors making them more at risk of falling. **Simple changes can significantly reduce the risk of further falls.**

The most effective way to manage falls in care homes is to take a preventive approach.

Top Facts

- Every minute 6 people over the age of 65 suffer a fall. (Age UK)
- Half of all people over 80 will fall at least once per year.
- Injury rates are considerably higher for people living in care homes, with 10-20% of falls resulting in a hip fracture
- 25% of people admitted to an acute hospital with a hip fracture come directly from a care home.
- 35% of falls in care homes result in serious injury and up to 8% in fractures.
- In care homes falls account for around 90% of reportable injuries to residents.
- By addressing peoples' specific risk factors for falls, between 50% and 60% of falls may be prevented.
- Across the UK every year 280,000 people end up in A&E after a fall, costing the NHS £1.5 billion. (The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy)

Top Tips

- Footwear should have a flat, non-slip sole and adjustable fastening (such as Velcro) to ensure good fit.
- Mobility aids should be readily available, in good condition, for individual use and kept close by
- Encourage residents to keep as active as possible. Helping with regular walks using an appropriate walking aid, may help to maintain or regain their confidence.
- Regular exercise designed to improve strength and balance will reduce the risk of falling, e.g. standing up practice.
- Standing regularly and avoiding long periods of sitting will really help keep muscles strong.
- Eyesight and hearing should be checked annually. Check glasses and hearing aids are in good condition, clean, worn consistently and kept within reach
- Ensure the living environment is clear and clutter free. Remove any trip hazards, e.g. loose rugs or trailing wires and ensure adequate lighting.
- Residents who wake regularly during the night to use the toilet may benefit from a commode next to the bed. Otherwise, glasses, walking aid and call bell should be within easy reach and adequate night time lighting.
- Increasing the amount of water care home residents drink can reduce the number of falls, improve sleep and reduce bladder problems. Aim for about 6-8 drinks per day.
- Ensure residents eat a well-balanced and nutritious diet to enhance muscle strength and stamina
- Monitor residents feet to ensure feet and nails are in good condition and not causing pain or problems.
- Check medications have been reviewed within the last 12 months and report any side-effects to the GP
- Any feelings of dizziness or faintness should be reported to the GP and lying to standing blood pressure should be measured.
- Hip protector pads are most suitable for residents who are at high risk of repeated falls and at risk of fracture – especially if they have osteoporosis.

Useful Links

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/>
- <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/fitness/falls-prevention/>