

Fall Prevention

A Falls Safety Guide for Residents, their Families, Friends and Team Members



We are committed to delivering safe resident care and we need your help to achieve that goal. One area that requires constant attention is the prevention of injury from falls. While we recognize that we could fully prevent falls by using restraints, we will not do that. We value choice and we accept that there are risks associated with living fully. Instead, our focus is on preventable falls and how we can minimize and eliminate harm. By being aware and proactive, we can significantly reduce the risk of injury from falling.

To reduce your risks

The best prevention from falls injury is to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle through appropriate exercise, good nutrition, regular physical checkups, and eye and ear exams. As we age, we also need to learn new ways to move safely as our bodies are changing. Some good practices include:

- 🌿 Rise slowly from a bed or chair to avoid sudden drop in blood pressure
- 🌿 Watch for slippery surfaces when outdoors especially in winter
- 🌿 Wear appropriate footwear (non-skid rubber soled and low heels) and avoid wearing only socks on tile or wood floors
- 🌿 Use support aids prescribed for you such as a walker or cane for moving about
- 🌿 Understand the effect of your medications and ask your doctor (or pharmacist) to review them with you

We also need to keep our environment safe by maintaining clear walkways and eliminating any tripping hazards including throw rugs and loose items. Read on to learn more about the risk factors and how we can manage them.

Fall prevention: In residential care

FACTS

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths and hospitalizations for seniors in British Columbia (BC).

Falls are the primary contributing cause for acute hospitalizations among BC Residents 65+.¹

Older adults with fall-related injuries tend to stay in hospital almost twice as long as older adults hospitalized for all other reasons.

Fifty percent of post hip fracture patients will not regain pre-injury ambulation status and require permanent use of a cane, walker or other mobility aid for walking.¹

¹ Information derived from BC Injury research and prevention unit

RISK FACTORS

There are a number of health and living conditions than can increase the chance of falling and injury, particularly as we age. By being aware and taking action, you can minimize and even eliminate the risk.

Do you have...

- 🌸 A history of falls and/or a fear of falling?
- 🌸 Difficulty seeing or visual impairment?
- 🌸 Muscle weakness and/or lower body weakness?
- 🌸 Impaired mobility or a balance and gait deficit?
- 🌸 Incontinence including bladder and/or bowel control?
- 🌸 Multiple medications including anti-psychotics or sedatives?
- 🌸 A chronic illness and/or disability such as dementia, stroke, Parkinson's disease, or arthritis?
- 🌸 Infections or other general health concerns?
- 🌸 Depression or other mental health challenges?
- 🌸 Any communication challenges or English as a second language?
- 🌸 Inappropriate footwear and/or inappropriate assistive devices?
- 🌸 A familiar setting or are you in a new location?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these factors, please raise them immediately with your doctor and care team. We can work with you to create a plan of care that supports your needs and helps manage the risks.

For example, wearing hip protectors is one way to reduce your risk of injury from falls. Or if you are at risk for osteoporosis, calcium supplementation can help improve or maintain bone strength. There are many things you can do to reduce your falls risk.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

In addition to our health factors, our environment can either contribute to the risk or help support us. We need to be very aware of the dangers that can cause a fall including...

- 🌸 Stairs
- 🌸 Slippery or uneven surfaces
- 🌸 Poor lighting and sharp contrasts in colour
- 🌸 Clutter or obstacles such as furniture in pathways, electrical cords, throw rugs, loose carpets and other hazards
- 🌸 Pets that can get under foot
- 🌸 Inappropriate supports such as towel bars or shower curtains

Instead, we must keep areas clear and use proper supports including ...

- 🌸 Secure hand rails, grab bars or transfer bars that have been properly installed for safety
- 🌸 Rest areas and proper chairs with arms to help with sitting and standing
- 🌸 Curb ramps and keeping floor surfaces safe and maintained
- 🌸 Supportive restraints such as helping with trunk control

Let's use the environment to help us manage falls, not cause them.



Preventing falls, together

Remember that most falls can be prevented – particularly if we work together. Be aware of how health conditions can impact balance and awareness. Be proactive and take action to keep the environment safe. Be involved and partner with us to ensure your care is safe.

Please speak to any member of our team for more information about preventing falls or to share your ideas and comments.