Falling Prevention Information Sheet

We want a society where older adults can live to their full potential. While falls are a threat to the health and independence of older adults and can significantly limit their ability to remain self-sufficient, the opportunity to reduce falls among older adults has never been better. More than one third of adults 65 and older fall each year. People age 75 and older who fall are more likely to be admitted to a long-term care facility for a year or longer. Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. Preventing slips, trips and falls in older adults requires a good fall prevention program; there are three key components of such a program:
1. A combination of simple home modifications can make life safer.
2. Understanding how medications may increase the risk of a fall;
3. Discovering that increased amounts of low impact exercise and physical activity can improve balance and contribute to fall prevention.

Tips to prevent falls
1. **Make an appointment with your doctor and optometrist.** Your doctor may consider weaning you off certain medications such as sedatives and some types of antidepressants. You may be more likely to fall if you are taking four or more medicines. You are also likely to fall if you have changed your medicine within the past two weeks. Have your eyes checked every year for vision changes, cataracts, glaucoma and other eye problems. Have your hearing checked every two years. Get screened and treated for osteoporosis.
2. **Have you fallen before?** Document when, where and how you fell.
3. **Could your health conditions cause a fall?** Certain eye and ear disorders may increase your risk of falls. How comfortable you are when you walk? Do you feel any dizziness, joint pain, numbness or shortness of breath when you walk?
   2. **Keep moving;** physical activity can go a long way toward fall prevention. Many people who fall, even if they are not injured, develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to limit their activities leading to reduced mobility and loss of physical fitness, which in turn increases their actual risk of falling. Exercise regularly. It is important that the exercises focus on increasing leg strength and improving balance, and that they get more challenging over time. Tai Chi involves acting out a series of fluid movements that emphasize balance and properly distributing your weight. It is like dancing, except it is done very slowly. A 2004 study by the American College of Sports Medicine showed that elderly people improved their balance after only four weeks of Tai Chi lessons. An added benefit to Tai Chi is it is a low impact exercise, so you don't need to worry about injuring yourself. Weight bearing exercises with increased progressions are important.
4. **Footwear.** Wear sensible shoes; get your feet measured, use sturdy non skid soles, avoid slippers, heels, thick soles. Use lace ups.
4. **Keep your home safe.** Be sure your home is well lit so that you can see things you might trip over. Use night lights in your bedroom, bathroom, hallways and stairways. Remove throw rugs or fasten them to the floor with carpet tape. Tack down carpet edges. Don't put electrical cords across pathways. Have grab bars put in your bathtub, shower and toilet area. Have handrails put on both sides of stairways. Don't climb on stools and stepladders. Get someone else to help with jobs that call for climbing. Don't wax your floors at all, or use a non-skid wax. Have sidewalks and walkways repaired so that surfaces are smooth and even.

5. **Proper Nutrition.** Get adequate calcium and vitamin D—from food and/or from supplements.

6. **Standing up.** When you get up from bed during the night or in the morning, sit on the side of the bed for a minute or two before you stand up. This will give your blood pressure time to adjust, and you will feel less dizzy.

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**Tests**

**Chair Stand Test**
Stand up and down as quickly as possible, 5 x with arms folded. Max time allowed 2 minutes.

**Four Test Balance Test**
Each position must be held for 10 seconds, Progress to next or the test is failed.

**Exercises**
2-3 times a week

**Weight Shifts**
Weight shifts are a simple way to improve your balance. Simply stand straight with your feet the same width as your hips. Begin with your weight distributed equally on both legs, then shift your weight to your right leg and lift your left leg off of the floor. Hold your left leg off of the floor for 30 seconds, and then return to the starting position. Repeat this exercise by alternating whether you shift onto your left or right foot.

**Walking Exercises**
Try walking exercises during your daily routine to improve your balance. 30 mins daily is suggested but it can be broken down into 3 x 10 minutes. A 2007 study in the journal Osteoporosis International showed that you can improve your balance with simple walking exercises, such as walking with one foot in front of the other, walking on the tips of your toes, walking on your heel or walking sideways. These exercises can even be done as you walk around your house. You can also try standing on one foot or standing with one foot in front of the other. As you balance improves, you should be able to do these standing exercises for longer periods of time.

**Chair Exercise**
This exercise can actually be done sitting on any solid surface. Sit in an upright position with your eyes closed. Lift one of your legs so it locks out parallel to the floor. Hold your leg up and criss-cross your arms so your right hand is on your left shoulder and your left
hand is on your right shoulder. Reverse the movement, then repeat with your other leg. Keep your eyes closed throughout this exercise.

**Bridges**
Lie on back, tuck belly into the floor to stabilize pelvis; squeeze glut cheeks (like holding a penny), lift the hips and hold for a short count. Slowly lower but keep that penny squeezed!

**Leg Lifting**
Seated or on your back straight leg lifting and hold. Start with no weights then add 1 lb at a time of ankle weights or rubber bands. You want to try to get to 4 lbs!

**Upper Body**
Don’t forget the top half! Laying flat or seated holding light dumbbells, arm raises. If lying flat have hands at hips with thumbs to ceiling; lift straight up overhead till thumbs point behind head to floor. If seated lift arms straight to shoulder height or lower. Sitting or lying flat, lift bells 1 inch and send straight arms out to side (like a snow Angel) and back again.

**Back on Heels or Toe Raises**