

Reducing the risk of falls for people living with dementia

Falls are often a problem for many people living with dementia and injuries such as broken bones are a common outcome.

There are many things that can increase the risk of falls for older people. Please see the attached booklet, “**Don’t fall for it, falls can be prevented- A guide to preventing falls for older people**”, which provides more detail of what can cause falls and how to reduce the risk of falling.

Key Risk factors that can play a role in causing falls & what can be done to reduce the risk

Health factors: There are many health problems that can increase a person’s risk of falls:

- Poor eyesight
 - Poor balance,
 - Taking certain medicines or multiple medicines may result in a higher risk of falls.
- Your doctor, chemist or health worker can suggest ways to reduce the risk of falling.

In the environment: Risks present in the home and surrounds can be reduced by:

- Avoiding loose mats,
- Using rails for indoor or outdoor steps
- Using bedside or night lights in passage ways to avoid walking in the dark.
- Wearing firm fitting enclosed footwear
- Avoiding high heeled shoes can help a person remain steady when walking.

Acute health problems such as a bladder infection or chest infection can increase a person’s risk of falling, so seeking prompt medical review for these problems can reduce the risk of falls.

Dementia can also increase the risk of falls due to a person’s:

- Reduced insight about safety
- Reduced ability to identify hazards and risks
- Wandering and agitation

Many falls can be prevented. What can be done?

The falls prevention booklet has details on how to make sure the persons’ home and surround are safe. The booklet provides details on what else can be done and where to seek help.

Keeping fit and physically active is important for people living with dementia.

Exercise can help to improve balance and steadiness when walking. Health workers such as physiotherapists can assess and advise if an exercise program will be helpful and can provide a program to suit the person and the home

If falls continue to occur, your doctor may suggest some treatments to reduce the risk of injuries. These might include using hip protectors (special under garments) that provide protection to the hips if a fall does occur. Hip protectors must be measured and fitted to ensure a good fit.

Vitamin D and calcium tablets may also be prescribed to strengthen bones and muscle to lessen the chances of fractures if falls occur.

If you or your loved one become more unsteady when walking, fall over or have a near miss you should tell the doctor or your health worker. A detailed check-up can find out the best way to reduce the risk of future falls