



"Lighting the way with better patient care."

**Anova**  
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Home Health • Hospice • Palliative • Home Care

## HOSPICE PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### FALL PREVENTION PROGRAM

#### Why has a patient's fall risk increased?

Most falls are caused by a combination of risk factors. The more risk factors a person has, the greater their chances of falling. Many risk factors can be changed or modified to help prevent falls. Risk factors include:

- Osteoporosis
- Unstable walking pattern – loss of balance when walking or having to hold on to furniture or walls when walking
- Fluctuations in blood pressure or orthostatic blood pressure – blood pressure drops when there is a change in position
- Incontinence
- Visual impairment
- Neuropathy of the feet or legs – decreased sensation or feeling
- Multiple medications
- Home hazards such as:
  - Cluttered pathways in the home
  - Lack of hand rails by steps
  - Poor lighting – pay special attention to hallways, stairs and entryways
  - Loose rugs – throw rugs or bumps in carpet
  - History of falls -2 or more in the last 6 months
- Age – risk of falls increases with age
- Lack of vitamin D
- Weak leg muscles

#### How can you decrease the risk of falling?

- Use assistive devices such as a cane or walker
- Remove loose rugs, carpets and area rugs that can lift and catch easily
  - If patient is resistant to removing rugs, use double sided tape to keep from moving.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have thin, non-slip soles
- Avoid wearing slippers or athletic shoes with deep treads
- Create clear pathways by moving furniture, piles of items or other impediments to barrier free movement
- Change position from sitting to standing slowly
  - Scoot to the edge of the chair and sit for a minute
  - Then stand slowly
  - Stand in place for a minute before starting to walk
- Keep a night light in the bathroom, halls, entryways and anywhere else needed to brighten dark areas
- Place a lamp, flashlight and extra batteries at easy reach from bed

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- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone
- Paint a contrasting color at the top front edge of all your steps to draw attention to them
- Have your vision checked by an eye doctor at least once a year
- Be aware of where your pets are at all times
- Do not walk around or over cords or wires
  - Tape wires and cords to the wall so they are out of the way
  - Have an electrician add more outlets if needed
- Use non-slip mats on the bathtub and/or shower floor Use an elevated toilet seat
- Keep items used often within easy reach or in lower cabinets
- Avoid using step stools, ladders or standing on a chair to reach items stored in higher areas
- Clean up spills immediately
- Consider wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and are unable to get up on your own
- Have a medical professional look at all of your medications (including over the counter ones like aspirin) and vitamins to review how they work and how they might interact with one another
- Do strength and balance exercises daily that improve balance and strengthen legs (like Tai Chi), unless prohibited by your healthcare provider

### **How can you make your home safer to prevent falls?**

#### Living and Dining Rooms:

- Arrange furniture for easy movement
- Choose tall furniture for easy standing
- Remove area rugs and other tripping hazards
- Tuck cords safely away

#### Bedrooms:

- A lamp should be within easy reach
- Keep a flashlight next to your bed
- Add automatic night lights
- Keep exit route and pathway to bathroom clear

#### Kitchen:

- Keep frequently used items within easy reach
- Place non-ski mats on tile flooring
- Keep fire extinguisher in assessable location
- Cover all sharp corners with padding

#### Bathroom:

- Install grab bars in shower
- Some tubs may require a step for easier entry



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- Place non-slid mats on floor and in shower or tub
- Use raised toilet seat
- Shower chairs to allow for sitting while bathing
- Adjustable height and/or a hand-held shower head to improve reach

#### Pathways and Stairs:

- Keep free of clutter
- Secure carpets with rug tape or remove completely
- Install handrails
- Have adequate lighting inside and outside the home
- Remove obstacles and hazards along pathways to home entrances
- Ramps to improve access, including low-cost temporary ramps

#### Additional Suggestions:

- An emergency alert system to alert others if you fall
- A bell on a small dog or a cat – small pets can be obstacles when not seen or heard

#### **How can you modify your home?**

- A home assessment helps identify hazards in the home and recommend solutions. To assess your home, ask your doctor for a referral to an occupational therapist or find an assessment checklist. Depending on your income and age, you may qualify to have a health care professional advise you on changes and/or funding support to make the changes.
- If you are unable to do make the modifications yourself, seek out help:
  - You can hire a building professional, such as a handy worker, remodeler, or contractor
  - You can contact a home modification specialist found through the following ways:
    - Your local area agency on aging may provide home modification services, referrals or financial assistance. Call the free Eldercare Locator at: 800-677-1116.
    - Your Independent Living Center will be a helpful resource.
    - The National Directory of Home Modification and Repair Resources lists providers by city.
- You don't have to be a homeowner to make home modifications – renters are allowed to make changes to their homes! Under the federal Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, landlords in structures with four or more units must allow reasonable home modification requests to allow tenants to remain living in their home. Contact your local Fair Housing Office to learn more.
- The Fall Prevention Center of Excellence offers a collection of helpful resources that suggest how to make homes safe and where to find services, programs, and funding support in your area. Visit: [homemods.org](http://homemods.org).