

Integrating Fall Prevention into Practice

Working together, many types of healthcare providers can help identify and manage patients at risk of falling. You can help reduce falls by screening all older persons once a year for previous falls and/or balance problems. For those who screen positive, perform a fall risk assessment and help patients understand and act upon the findings using proven prevention strategies.

Assessments and/or Interventions	Identify who in your practice can do this	What it involves
Screen all older patients for falls		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have each patient complete the <i>Stay Independent</i> brochure—help if necessary.
Identify modifiable fall risk factors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review <i>Stay Independent</i> brochure & take a falls history.
Evaluate gait, lower body strength & balance Address identified deficits		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer one or more gait, strength & balance tests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timed Up & Go Test (Recommended) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe & record patient's postural stability, gait, stride length & sway. 30-Second Chair Stand Test (Optional) 4-Stage Balance Test (Optional) As needed, refer to physical therapist or recommend community exercise or fall prevention program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PTs can assess gait & balance, provide one-on-one progressive gait & balance retraining, strengthening exercises, & recommend & teach correct use of assistive devices.
Conduct focused physical exam Address modifiable and/or treatable risk factors		<p>In addition to a customary medical exam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess muscle tone, look for increased tone, hypertonia (cogwheeling). Screen for cognitive impairment & depression. Examine feet & evaluate footwear. Look for structural abnormalities, deficits in sensation & proprioception. If needed, refer to podiatrists or pedorthists. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These specialists can identify & treat foot problems & can prescribe corrective footwear & orthotics.
Assess for & manage postural hypotension		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check supine & standing blood pressure using 1-page protocol, <i>Measuring Orthostatic Blood Pressure</i>. Recommend medication changes to reduce hypotension. Monitor patient as he/she makes recommended changes. Counsel patient & give the brochure, <i>Postural Hypotension, What It Is and How to Manage It</i>.
Review & manage medications		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taper & stop psychoactive medications if there are no clear indications. Try to reduce doses of necessary psychoactive medications. Recommend changes to reduce psychoactive medications. Monitor patient as he/she makes recommended changes.
Increase vitamin D		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend at least 800 IU vitamin D supplement.
Assess visual acuity & optimize vision		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer brief vision test. Refer to ophthalmologists or optometrists. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These specialists can identify & treat medical conditions contributing to vision problems & address problems with visual acuity & contrast sensitivity.
Address home safety & how to reduce fall hazards		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counsel patient about reducing fall hazards. Give CDC brochure, <i>Check for Safety</i>. Refer to OT to assess safety & patient's ability to function in the home.
Educate about what causes falls & how to prevent them		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate patient about fall prevention strategies. Give CDC brochure, <i>What YOU Can Do to Prevent Falls</i>. Recommend exercise or community fall prevention program.
Identify community exercise & fall prevention programs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact senior services providers & community organizations that provide exercise & fall prevention programs for seniors. Compile a resource list of available programs.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

STEADI Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries