

September 2009



Your Partner in Senior Care at Home

Funny Bone

How old are you?

A woman walked up to a little old man rocking in a chair on his porch.

"I couldn't help noticing how happy you look," she said.

"What's your secret for a long happy life?"

"I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day," he said. "I also drink a case of whiskey a week, eat fatty foods, and never exercise."

"That's amazing," the woman said. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-six," he said.

Quote of the Month

"The more a man knows, the more he forgives"

--Catherine the Great

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Falls in Seniors: What's the Big Deal?

by Michelle Rojas-Soto



Falls among the elderly are a very serious problem. The Center for Disease Control reports that more than one third of adults over 65 years of age fall each year. According to a 2004 study by the California Department of Public Health, there were 25,150 falls which resulted in hospitalizations in Los Angeles and Orange Counties alone. Each of these hospitalizations cost an average of \$40,000 to \$43,000.

Falls can often lead to fractures, and are the leading cause of injury deaths. Surprisingly, more than half of all falls in older adults happen inside the home, with stairwells, living rooms and bedrooms being the most common locations.

If you know a senior who has fallen, you probably know how long-lasting the pain, loss of mobility, and other side effects can be. Falls can lead to decreased mobility and independence, which can then lead to admission to a nursing home or long-term care facility. For those of us committed to Aging in Place, preventing falls is crucial. Fall prevention can't be overdone.

Fall Prevention

So what can be done to prevent falls? According to the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence (www.stopfalls.org), successful fall prevention involves three areas: balance and strength, medical management, and environmental (home) modifications.

Balance, Strength and Physical Activity

Balance exercises can be adjusted according to an individual's abilities. Ask your primary physician for exercise suggestions. One simple exercise you can do is a Single Leg Stance. It doesn't require any special equipment. Start by standing behind a chair and holding on to it with your hands. Then slowly lift one leg up and hold in that position for 5 seconds. Bring your leg down, and switch sides. You can increase the difficulty of this exercise by holding the position for longer stretches, or by holding onto the chair with just one hand.

Medical Management

Taking multiple medications can put one at risk for falling.

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Have a Referral?



Know someone in
need of high-
quality home care

services?

Send us their name and phone
number and you will receive \$40
credit to your account for every
referral who hires us.

Especially if you are under the care of multiple physicians, be sure to keep a complete, up-to-date list of all the medications you are taking. Bring this list with you to your next doctor's appointment and ask your doctor about how these medications might interact with one another. You should also mention any other therapeutic substances you are taking without a prescription. Also, tell your doctor about any medications that make you sleepy or dizzy. Just as important, have your vision checked yearly and get adequate glasses whenever your prescription changes.

Environmental (Home) Modifications

There are lots of common sense precautions one can take to make a home safer. For example, make sure all area rugs have a non-slip backing or are removed from any walking path within the home. Since many falls occur in the bedroom, install a nightlight to illuminate the floor at night. Some night lights activate themselves in the dark.

Stairs should be of special concern. Install handrails on both sides of every stairwell, and make sure the stairwell is well-lit. Also, fix any loose or uneven steps. Anyone can trip on uneven pavement, and the hard edges in steps can make a fall particularly painful.

Next Steps

If you would like more information about fall prevention and home safety, you can contact the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence. Our agency can also provide you with a thorough home safety checklist you can use. For assistance in obtaining home safety equipment, contact the Convalescent Aid Society (CAS), which provides free equipment on loan throughout the San Gabriel Valley. If you live outside that area, they can also suggest resources in your neighborhood.

Falls happen when least expected and the consequences are very serious. Take action today. A fall prevention program is one of the cheapest things you can do to protect yourself against injury.

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