



MACOMB COUNTY

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

What Do I Need to Know About Falls? Am I At Risk? Educational Handout

Purpose:

This educational resource is provided to help keep individuals safer in the community by preventing falls when possible.

Background:

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) falls are the leading cause of injury and injury-related deaths among adults 65 years of age and over. At least one out of every 4 older Americans had a fall in 2015. Falling can be dangerous for adults of any age. Some falls can be prevented by following the recommendations in this handout.

Who may be at risk?

- Elderly adults
- Individuals on various medications that may cause dizziness, confusion, or sedation.
- Individuals with mobility issues, visual impairment, or unsteady gait,
- Individuals who suffer from conditions that may cause a rushed movement to the bathroom such as incontinence.
- Individuals who suffer from debilitating conditions resulting in muscle weakness.
- Individuals with diabetes, individuals who have heart problems or thyroid conditions or conditions that affect nerves, feet, or blood vessels.
- Alcohol consumption impacts balance leading to a possible fall.

How to prepare if I am at risk?

- As falls may happen at any time, it is advised that you keep a well-charged cordless phone or mobile with you.
- Arrange for daily contact with a family member or friend.
- Consider emergency response systems like smartwatches or other devices that can be carried as a necklace or bracelet and that with the push of a button can call for help.

Steps to Stay Safe:

- Tell a provider right away if you fall, worry about falling, or feel unsteady.
- Ask prescribers to review medications that may be making you dizzy or drowsy.
- Ask your healthcare provider about the best type of exercise for you. Strength training exercises may help to improve balance. Work with your healthcare provider on an exercise program plan that is right for you.
- Ask your healthcare provider to check your feet and refer you to a specialist if needed.
- See an eye doctor yearly and ensure that corrective prescriptions are worn.
- Have your hearing tested. If you already have a hearing aid be sure it fits well and wear it.
- Keep floors and stairways free from clutter where items may cause a tripping hazard.
- Avoid or limit alcohol as this may impact your balance.
- Get enough sleep as feeling tired may also increase your risk of falling.
- Remove rugs whenever possible. If unable to remove a rug, tape it down.
- Arrange the home so items most frequently used are at waist level.

- Keep areas well-lit and use handrails whenever possible.
- Consider adding handrails to the bathroom near the tub and toilet.
- Add non-slip texture or mats to the bathroom floor and tub.
- Wear well-fitting shoes and non-slip footwear.
- Ask your healthcare provider for footwear recommendations.
- If you must reach up high, use a step stool with area to hold onto. Avoid using a chair.
- Fix loose or uneven handrails, flooring, or steps.

*Information adapted from Center for Disease Control STEADI initiative 2017 and the NIH <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/falls-and-falls-prevention/falls-and-fractures-older-adults-causes-and-prevention>

What to do if I fall?

- If you are hurt or are unable to get up, ask someone for help or call 911. If you believe you can get up, always call for someone to assist you in getting up whenever possible.
- If alone, get up so slowly and sit down first. Do not attempt to quickly get up as this may precipitate another fall.
- Do not ignore a fall. Whether you feel you are hurt or not, report the incident to your health care provider and follow their advice on next steps.

Resources:

Review the informational sources listed below to learn more about your risk of falling, the risks associated with falling, and how to limit such risks.

- A) Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults
<https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI-Brochure-CheckForSafety-508.pdf>
- B) Stay Independent Learn More About Fall Prevention Questionnaire
<https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI-Brochure-StayIndependent-508.pdf>
- C) The Medications Can Be linked to Injuries As We Age
https://www.cdc.gov/transportationsafety/pdf/older_adult_drivers/Medicine-Fact-Sheet-Tribal.pdf

Information for Caregivers:

Review the informational source listed below to learn about how to help loved ones at risk:

- A) Family Caregivers: Protect your loved ones from falling
<https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI-CaregiverBrochure.pdf>