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Watch your step



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INTRODUCTION

As we grow older the chances of taking a nasty tumble grows ever more daunting. Slips and falls can happen to anyone, but in the older person the consequences are often more detrimental. An older person can easily get seriously injured or even sustain and life-threatening bone fracture. Furthermore, the fear of falling can easily be as disabling as an actual fall and can be major source of anxiety in the life of an older person. So, you better watch your step or you might fall.



WHY DO WE FALL

As we grow older, we lose a lot of flexibility in our muscles and tendons and our joints grow stiffer. Thus, we tend to be much less agile than before and we tend to trip more and more often over loose carpets or on uneven surfaces.

Often, we start to lose some of that eagle eye that we had as a younger person and it becomes more difficult to judge steppe heights or we simply did not see that thing lying over our path on the floor.

as we grow older, we need to take more and more medication just to maintain our health. Some medications tend to influence our consciousness, cause that brief faint spell that you get when you stand up to suddenly or manage to disturb our balance.

Finally, we might already have health issues; we might have suffered a previous stroke and our mobility has been compromised by this health incident.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

We can go to the doctor and discuss the adverse effects of our medications. We could mention any fears or problems that we seem to have concerning a possible fall.

We can adapt our living environment to be more fall proof.

We can work on our fitness and agility. If we need help with that, we can see a Physiotherapist for an assessment and appropriate exercise program.



FALLPROOF YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Take a look at your house and the surrounding areas around your home. Perhaps it is a good idea to ask a friend or a professional person to assist you in this task, because they provide some fresh insights and together you can identify the problem areas that should be corrected.

Some examples of correcting fall risks in the home are:
remove loose rugs from the floors

Remove small tables or stools from walk ways

Improve lighting in tricky walk areas, like staircases

Fix handles to tricky mobility areas like shower and toilets

Clear the outside areas around the house of degree or clutter

Ensure that outside walkways are dry and even

GO TO THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST

You should go see a physiotherapist if:

If you think you are at risk of falling because your body is simply not strong or agile enough to prevent yourself from falling.

If you are not sure why you are falling, you can also go and see the physiotherapist for a fall risk assessment

Together with the physiotherapist you can explore the reasons why you might fall. Some of the reasons may be:

neurological: you might have a neurological condition that affects your balance and agility

Musculoskeletal: stiffness or weakness

Vestibular: you might have a condition that affect your balance center, that makes you stagger like a drunk person.

The physiotherapist can help you find the reason and help you work on a physical solution.

GO SEE A DOCTOR

You should go see your doctor if:

You are concerned about frequent dizzy spells or you find yourself staggering like a drunk person from time to time. You might be suffering from spikes or dips in your blood pressure or have some small health issue that can easily be remedied by your doctor.

You are experiencing adverse effects from your medication. Often it is easily remedied by changing the medication.

Sources

Common Wealth of Australia 2010.
Don't fall for it. A guide to prevent
falls for older people.

Google Images.