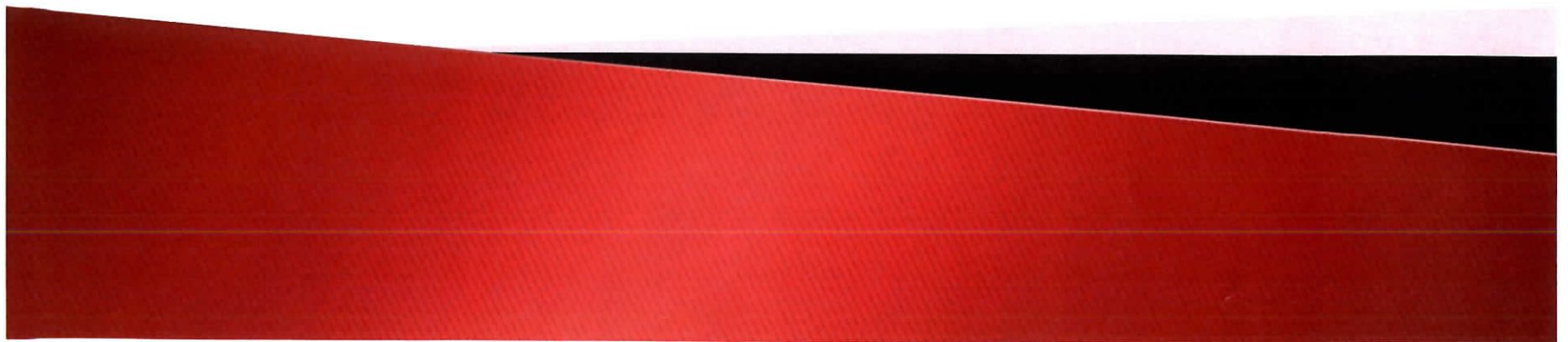


Fall Prevention in the elderly



Scope of the Problem

- ▶ About one of three adults over the age of 65 will fall this year.
- ▶ Falls are the leading cause of injury related death, among those age 65 and older.
- ▶ In 2008, about 2.1 million people were sent to the emergency departments, and half a million were hospitalized.
- ▶ The direct costs of falls in 2000 totaled 19 billion dollars.

Background Information

- ▶ Falls are a major problem for the elderly community. Fall related injuries can lead to fractures, brain injuries, and can limit the quality of life. The chances of falling significantly increases with age, and those with a history of falling are more susceptible to fall again. Fortunately, falls can be prevented.



Common Causes for Falls in the Elderly



- ▶ Environmental hazard
- ▶ Gait disturbance
- ▶ Balance disorders or weakness
- ▶ Pain related to arthritis
- ▶ Vertigo
- ▶ Medications or alcohol

Methods of Care

- ▶ Taking steps in learning fall prevention can substantially reduce the chances of falling. Some of these techniques include:
 - Adequate exercise
 - Knowledge of medications and side effects
 - Eye examinations to update prescriptions
 - Home safety
 - Medical equipment
 - Physical Therapy

Exercise

- ▶ Regular exercising can increase strength and balance.
 - Focus on leg strength and balance.
 - Tai Chi – Slow graceful movements have shown to improve strength, balance, coordination, and flexibility.
 - A physical therapist can design an exercise program to fit your needs and monitor your progress.



Medical or Assistive Equipment



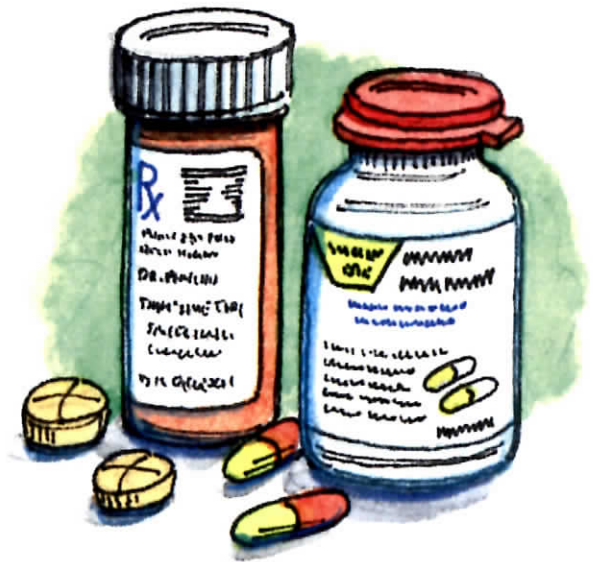
- ▶ Medical equipment can increase your stability.
 - Walkers, canes, wheelchairs
 - Shower chairs
 - Raised toilet seats
 - Grab bars
 - Transfer bench
 - Shoes
 - Wear proper fitting shoes with nonskid soles
 - Slippers, high heels, and shoes with slick soles can make you slip, stumble, and fall.
 - Talk to a doctor to access what equipment you qualify for.

Home and Environmental Safety

- ▶ Having a clean and hazard free environment can substantially reduce the chances of falling
 - Remove objects from the ground
 - Loose rugs, boxes, toys
 - Keep high traffic areas clear
 - Move furniture like coffee tables and lamps to allow free movement
 - Have sufficient lighting

Medications

- ▶ Know your medications
 - Medications can have various side effects on your body and motor skills
 - Make a list of your medications (prescription and over-the-counter) and your doctor can identify which ones increase your risk of falling



Monitor Your Health

- ▶ Knowing your body and how you function can eliminate unnecessary risks that contribute to falling.
 - Eye examinations to increase your sight and awareness can reduce unnecessary falls.
 - See your doctor regularly and let them know if you have any health problems such as shortness of breath, numbness, dizziness, or joint pain.



Timed Up and Go Test

- ▶ This test may help you determine whether you are in need of an assistive device.
 - The person may wear their usual footwear and can use any assistive device they normally use.
 - 1. Have the person sit in the chair with their back to the chair and their arms resting on the arm rests.
 - 2. Ask the person to stand up from a standard chair and walk a distance of 10 ft. (3m).
 - 3. Have the person turn around, walk back to the chair and sit down again.
 - Timing begins when the person starts to rise from the chair and ends when he or she returns to the chair and sits down.

Results from Timed Up and Go Test

- ▶ *The person should be given 1 practice trial and then 3 actual trials. The times from the three actual trials are averaged.*
- ▶ Predictive Results
- ▶ Seconds Rating
- ▶ Time less than 10 seconds Freely mobile
- ▶ Time less than 20 seconds Mostly independent
- ▶ Time is 20–29 seconds Variable mobility
- ▶ Time is greater than 30 seconds Impaired mobility



Falls can significantly hinder your health and independence. Taking the proper steps to reduce falls can increase your quality of life.