



Avoid The Fall; *preserve independent living*

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A fall can be a life changing event. Falls can lead to rapid decline in health and are the leading cause of loss of independence in seniors. While many factors contribute to falls, medication problems are rapidly topping the list. The rate of falls is increasing, and so are the costs, to the healthcare system, and to the families and caregivers of seniors.

We should no longer say, "It was just a fall."

One in three people over age 65 will fall each year. About half who fall will not be able to get up without help. In fact, for those over 65 years, falls are the leading cause of death due to injury.

Many falls go unreported and untreated.

Seniors may fear families stepping in to take away independence. As a result many will experience another fall within the next six months. Often this second fall is worse than the first, with more serious consequences.

The rapid increase in falls can be attributed in part to ever more complex medication regimens.

The last several decades have seen a tremendous increase in the number of medications taken by many seniors. Medication mis-management, coupled with common aging conditions such as limited mobility, declining strength and balance, heart and nerve disease, memory lapses, poor vision, and bowel and bladder problems, contribute greatly to the increase in falls.

Medications can worsen the situation with side effects such as increased confusion, drowsiness, weakness, and appetite changes. Couple all of this with homes that are not set up for safety, and you have a recipe for disaster.

Medications are such a large contributor to the number of falls that special national programs are being created and introduced in Kentucky to address falls prevention awareness. Take note of special media information that will be shared.

Report your falls or “near falls”.

And always consider that if you or a loved one has experienced a fall or “near fall” that medications may be a contributing factor. Have a professional review the medication regimen to determine if side effects are contributing to the falls.

Take heart: no risk factor for falls is as potentially preventable or reversible as medication use.

For Fall Prevention Tips, visit:

<http://personnel.ky.gov/emprel/safetyprogram/fallprevention.htm>

<http://www.srcareexperts.org>

http://www.srcareexperts.org/pdfs/agingwell/2010_fall.pdf