



Kentucky developing fall awareness and prevention programs

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More than just a fall.....

We should no longer say "It was just a fall." More than one third of those over 65 fall each year and falls are the leading cause of deaths due to injury for this age group. Almost 40 percent of all injuries treated by health professionals in the U.S. during a three year period (2004-2007) were the result of falls.

Many less serious falls are never treated by health professionals and a large number of falls go unreported by those over 65. Seniors fear reporting falls because they believe falling may reflect on their ability to remain independent. This silence only speeds up chances of experiencing more serious falls and losing independence in the future. Usually, about two thirds of these seniors have a second, more debilitating fall within six months of the first unreported fall.

The Cost of Falls

Most recent available data from 2000 indicates direct medical costs for fatal falls were \$179 million and for non-fatal falls were \$19 billion. Additionally, for the non-fatal falls, these costs do not reflect the caregiver's costs. The rates of fall-related deaths among older adults have risen significantly over the past decade. The astounding growth in the cost of falls is so great that all states are in the process of developing, promoting and implementing fall awareness and prevention programs. Kentucky's will be announced in late September by Governor Steve Beshear.

Many Issues Contribute to Falls

Many issues can contribute to falls: poor vision, mobility, strength, balance, heart and nerve disease, memory or bowel and bladder problems and environment. Medications are also frequently the cause of falls since

Medication management is important because more complex medications are now being used for senior's healthcare issues. New medications, without an extensive track record of use in patients 65 and older, are often used.

Seniors are cared for by an increasing number of healthcare providers, which may increase senior's fall potential. Because of their multiple health issues, seniors usually see their primary doctor and one or more specialists. Their prescription drug plans may require using mail-order or specialty pharmacies and once prescription but now over-the-counter, all of which lack professional oversight.

Medication Management Can Decrease Falls

Medication management (using medications to their greatest benefit while avoiding or lessening risks of their use) can affect other senior ailments such as vision, mobility, strength, balance, heart and nerve disease, memory or bowel and bladder problems.

Report Falls

All seniors and caregivers should discuss and report all falls or near falls. A form can be downloaded from the website, www.SeniorPharmacySolutions.com, which details how a senior may be feeling when they fall or have a near fall. This documentation helps identify possible causes of falls and also helps seniors using medications to their greatest benefit while avoiding or lessening risks of falls.

Please remember, it is no longer "just a fall."

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Steps in Medication Management

1. Take medications as ordered, at the right dose and the right way.
2. Report negative side effects to the physician.
3. Don't assume the ailments or side effects are just part of the process of "just getting old".
4. Provide a complete list of medications (prescriptions, non-prescription, over the counter, vitamins, herbal supplements, or other "natural medicine").
5. Share how you respond to each type of medication.
6. Report if using the medications as they are ordered.