

ECHO Q and A's

Emergency and Community Health Outreach



ECHO Show #505 & #506 "Anyone Can Fall" Questions and Answers

1. This show is about a topic that a lot of us don't think much about until it happens to us or to a friend or relative. Why is it important to talk about falling?

Sample Answer:

- Falls are common.
- 1 in 3 adults over age 65 fall each year.
- The risk of falling increases with increasing age.
- If you have fallen once, there is a good chance you will fall again.
- Many people think that a fall is something that happens to someone else, but not to me. But the fact is: anyone can fall.
- Falling is not a "normal" part of aging. Falls can be prevented.

2. In order to prevent a fall, you need to know what causes a fall. What are some of the most common reasons that people fall?

Sample Answer:

The exact causes are unique to each one of us. You can talk with your doctor or health care provider to learn specifically why you fall. But, falls can occur for several reasons.

- Having muscle weakness and balance problems.
- Our medications.

- Feet and footwear.
- Poor vision.
- Health problems or medical conditions such as arthritis, depression.
- Hearing problems that impact balance.

3. How can I prevent a fall and stay healthy?

Sample Answer:

- One of the best ways to prevent a fall is through regular exercise and muscle strengthening exercises.
- Talk with your doctor or health care provider before you become physically active.
- Ask for suggestions on exercises that are right for you.
- Try to move your body every day. Thirty minutes a day of exercise is recommended but break it into 10-15 minutes blocks if that is easier.
- Walking is an easy and free way to move. Walk wherever and whenever you can. Find an enjoyable, safe place – go to a park, indoor shopping mall, or walk the hallway in your building.

4. Why do our medications cause us to fall?

Sample Answer:

- Our medicines or combinations of medicines can have side effects that may cause us to lose our balance or feel unsteady on our feet.
- Common side effects include feeling drowsy, dizzy or light-headed.
- The more medications you take, the more your risk of falling increases. This includes all medications both prescribed and not prescribed.
- Being put on a new medication or a recent change of medications could cause a fall.

5. What can you do to prevent a fall caused by medications?

- Do not stop or change the dosage of any medicine without talking to your doctor, health care provider, or pharmacist
- Talk with your doctor, health care provider, or pharmacist about all of your medications and side effects.
- Make a list of all the medications you are taking or bring your bottles of medicines with every time you see your doctor, health care provider, or pharmacist.
- Follow the instructions that come with your medications.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking other substances that could impair your judgment.

6. How does taking care of your feet and wearing the right type of shoes prevent a fall?

Sample Answer:

- If your feet hurt, you will be less active which could increase your risk of a fall.
- You should trim your toe nails regularly, using nail clippers. If you have difficulty seeing your toenails, reaching your feet, or have diabetes, ask your doctor, nurse or podiatrist (foot doctor) to help.
- Slip-on shoes are popular. They are easy to get on and off but wearing slip-ons can cause you to fall.
- To prevent a fall, wear supportive shoes that enclose your foot instead of slip-ons.
- Wear shoes with non-skid soles both indoors and outdoors.

7. What else can be done to reduce your chance of falling?

Sample Answer:

- Go to an eye doctor once a year for an eye exam.
- If you have glasses, wear them. Clean them daily.
- Try to eat healthy every day. Vitamin D is good for bones and muscle strength. This can help in preventing falls. And calcium can also be helpful in preventing osteoporosis.
- Vitamin D and calcium is found in milk and dairy products.
- Ask your doctor or health care provider if a Vitamin D supplement might be helpful for you.

8. Many falls occur at home while we are doing everyday activities. What are some tips to stay safe in your home?

Sample Answer:

- Move things you can trip over out of your path and off stairs.
- Put away your throw and scatter rugs.
- Move cords that you can trip over.
- Watch where your pets are sleeping or lying down.
- When walking up and downstairs, take your time and use the handrail.
- Brighten up your apartment or house. Turn the lights on as you move through the house and up and down the stairs. Use nightlights in bedrooms, halls and bathrooms.
- If wearing long, loose fitting clothing, be careful so not to trip over it.
- Sit down when putting on pants, socks and shoes.
- Try to avoid distractions and rushing.

9. How can I prevent a fall in my bathroom?

Sample Answer:

- Keep the floor dry.
- Use a non-slip mat in the tub or shower.
- Install a grab bar next to the toilet and in the bathtub or shower. A towel rack doesn't work – it can pull out of the wall.
- Complete a home safety check list to find fall hazards in your apartment or house.

10. How can I stay safe during the winter?

Sample Answer:

- Wear boots with non-skid soles.

- Take care when walking on slippery, wet surfaces.
- Shovel snow off steps, pathways, and entrances to your home. Ask for help if you need it.
- Sprinkle de-icer, salt, or sand on icy steps and sidewalks. Put a scoop or plastic cup in the bag and use what you need.
- Continue to move your body. But consider walking inside at a mall or on an indoor track.

11. What can I do if I have had a fall or am afraid of falling?

Sample Answer:

- Talk to someone that can help. Call your doctor, health care provider or nurse. Ask them to assess your risk of falling.
- Talk with your family and friends. They care about you and want you to stay independent.
- Call Senior LinkAge Line at 1-800-333-2433 to learn about resources in the community that can help.