Preventing Falls in Older Patients

Provider Pocket Guide

Key Facts about Falls:
• 1/3 of older adults (age 65+) fall each year.
• Many patients who have fallen do not talk about it.

This is What You Can Do:
RITUAL:
- Review self-assessment brochure
- Identify risk factors
- Test gait & balance
- Undertake multifactorial assessment
- Apply interventions
- Later, follow-up

For more information, go to: www.cdc.gov/steadi

Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you hear:</th>
<th>You can say:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precontemplation Stage</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Falling is just a matter of bad luck.</td>
<td>As we age, falls are more likely for many reasons, including changes in our balance and how we walk.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contemplation Stage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>My friend down the street fell and ended up in a nursing home.</td>
<td>Preventing falls can prevent broken hips &amp; help you stay independent.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation Stage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m worried about falling. Do you think there’s anything I can do to keep from falling?</td>
<td>Let’s look at some factors that may make you likely to fall &amp; talk about what you could do about one or two of them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Action Stage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I know a fall can be serious. What can I do to keep from falling and stay independent?</td>
<td>I’m going to fill out a referral form for a specialist who can help you improve your balance.</td>
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Key Steps for Fall Prevention

1. Be proactive—ask all patients 65+ if they’ve fallen in the past year.
2. Identify & address fall risk factors:
   - Lower body weakness
   - Gait and balance problems
   - Psychoactive medications
   - Postural dizziness
   - Poor vision
   - Problems with feet and/or shoes
   - Home safety
3. Refer as needed to specialists or community programs.
4. Follow-up with patient within 30 days.

Key Fall Interventions
- Educate patient
- Enhance strength & balance
- Modify medications
- Manage hypotension
- Supplement vitamin D +/- calcium
- Address foot problems
- Optimize vision
- Optimize home safety

Algorithm for Fall Risk Assessment & Interventions

- Patient completes Stay Independent brochure
- Screen for falls & fall risk
  - Patient answers YES to any key question:
    - Fell in past year? If YES, ask:
      - How many times? and, Were you injured?
      - Worries about falling?
    - Feel unsteady when standing or walking?
  - Review & modify medications
  - Vitamin D +/- calcium
  - Refer to PT to enhance gait, strength & balance
  - Manage & monitor hypotension
  - Address foot problems
  - Optimize vision
  - Optimize home safety

For these patients, consider additional risk assessment (e.g., medication review, cognitive screen, syncope)